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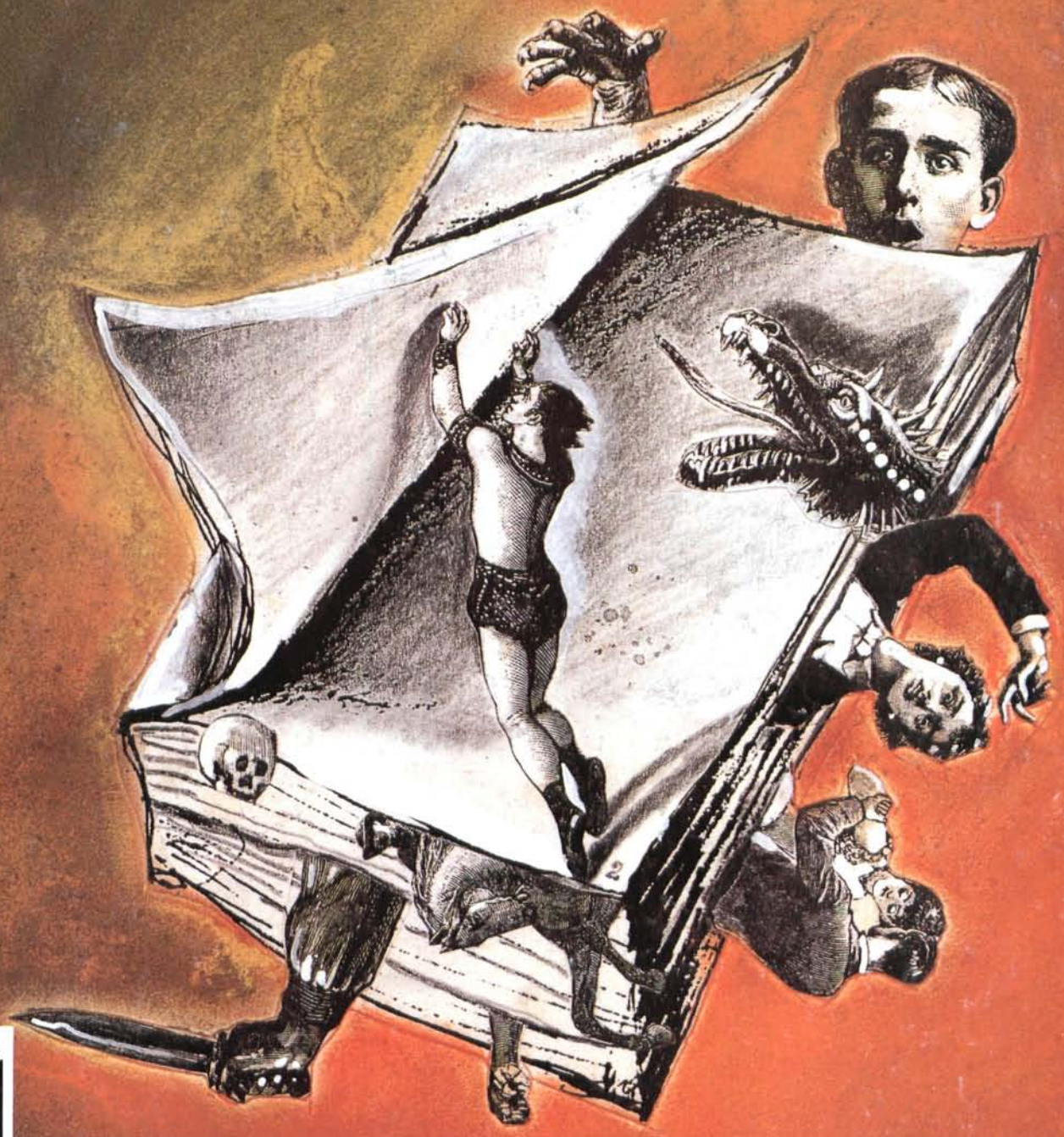

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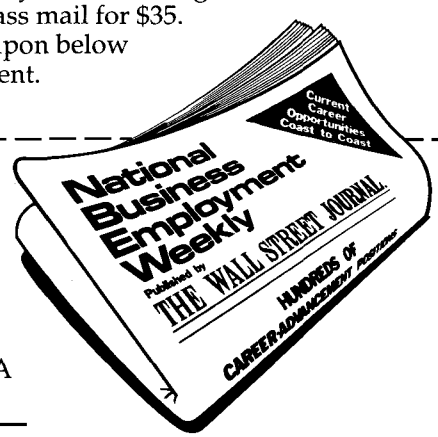
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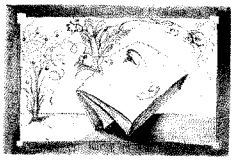

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A MAGAZINE OF AMERICAN CULTURE

Vol. 15, No. 8 August 1991

On 'Political Correctness'

While I recognize that Paul Gottfried and I clearly have philosophical differences on the nature and goals of education, I feel compelled to address one point in his review of my book in your May issue. Professor Gottfried correctly notes that I hold up the figure of Mark Van Doren of Columbia University as a personification of the humanistic scholarship and inspired teaching that is now found so rarely in the American academy. Gottfried animadverts that I fail to note that Van Doren "was a notorious apologist for Stalin."

Since the rise of "political correctness" to the forefront of the public's consciousness I have often noted that two groups tend to misunderstand either its nature or what is at stake in the struggle against its hegemony in the university: liberals *and* conservatives. The tragedy of higher education, which I discuss at length in *The Hollow Men* and which Gottfried chooses not to mention, is less the ideology of the faculty than the loss of a tradition of academic ethics and integrity; the substitution of propaganda for the Socratic method, and dogma for the search for truth. Consider this description of Mark Van Doren in the 1930's by no less a critic than Thomas Merton, who first took a class in English from Van Doren in 1935: "It was a class in English literature, and it had no special bias of any kind. It was simply about what it was supposed to be about: the English literature of the eighteenth century . . . It was because of this virtual scholasticism of Mark's that he would never permit himself to fall into the naive errors of those who try to read some favorite private doctrine into every poet they like of every nation and age."

If anything at all comes through Merton's account it is that "political correctness" is not new in the American university—and that Mark Van Doren was its living antithesis. Even then, Van Doren was a rarity. Today he would be unlikely to win tenure in any major department of English.

It is true that Van Doren occasionally indulged in ludicrous politics, including what Jeffrey Hart (a student and admirer of Van Doren) calls his "popular front phase." It was a phase that eventually passed and one that Van Doren later regretted. But the most important point to be made is that whatever Van Doren's politics may have been, they never entered the classroom, nor did they affect the quality of the intellectual atmosphere he created through his teaching.

The enemies of the university are those who subordinate their academic mission to ideology and prostitute their integrity to advancing a dogmatic political line. Although we can take issue with some of his political utterings, Van Doren never did this. Gottfried's smearing dismissal of Van Doren as ideologically unsound ignores this, and in doing so creates a standard that sounds depressingly like a political correctness of the right.

Gottfried does, however, make one thing quite clear. Although our campuses are imperiled by a New McCarthyism of the left, the old McCarthyism is alive and well, at least in the imagination of Paul Gottfried.

—*Charles J. Sykes*
Milwaukee, WI

Mr. Gottfried Replies:

Were it not for Charles Sykes' extended tribute to the greatness of Mark Van Doren, as illustrated by the willingness to have students read critics of liberal capitalism, I would never have noted Van Doren's infatuation with Stalin. In fact this quirk matters less for me than it should for Mr. Sykes, who speaks in his book repeatedly of instilling "democratic values." Not being of the same crusading mind-set, I favor educational diversity based on truly private institutions of higher learning. There Mark Van Doren, Allan Bloom, and Michael Levin might all find their places.

In my comments on Sykes' book, I underlined the magnitude of our educational problems by pointing to those

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ideological uses to which "public-spirited" educators have put the Western civilization curriculum. Already at the beginning of the century Irving Babbitt was railing against the vulgarizers of humanistic studies, and he had in mind the advocates of the very curricular reforms that Sykes applauds. Western civilization courses, as typified by their insertion at Columbia in the context of a crusade for democracy, have always been both political and time bound. Sykes disregards this fact either out of ignorance or because of sympathy for the political doctrines associated with the curriculum he defends.

My observations dealt with historical trends and had nothing to do with trying to discredit Mark Van Doren as an English teacher. Nor should they be interpreted as support for Joe McCarthy or his brand of apocalyptic anticommunism. The older I get, the more I appreciate Frank Chodorov's thoughts on a misguided politician. McCarthy might have done better to help pare down the welfare state instead of complaining about those who worked for it.

On the 'Constitution'

While George W. Carey (Opinions, April 1991) reached the right conclusion ("the Constitution of which he [Russell Kirk] writes in this book is, in fact, dead"), referring to Kirk's *The Conservative Constitution*, the headline writer could have done better than quoting only the first sentence—"Your Constitution is all sail and no anchor"—of the paragraph from Macaulay's letter to H.S. Randall (May 23, 1857), which stated why he, Macaulay, felt our Constitution would die.

The important statement that Macaulay made was: "Either some Caesar or Napoleon will seize the reins of government with a strong hand; or your republic will be fearfully plundered and laid waste by barbarians in the twentieth century as the Roman Empire was in the fifth; with this difference, that the Huns and Vandals who ravaged the Roman Empire came from without, and that your Huns and Vandals will have been engendered within your own country by your own institutions."

—*Richard L. Barkley*
Palo Alto, CA

CULTURAL REVOLUTIONS

WINNIE MANDELA'S recent conviction shows that something like the rule of law survives in South Africa after the unconditional release of her husband. On a visit to Johannesburg several months ago, I found myself more than once, to my amusement, arguing the court had to convict Winnie Mandela, to South Africans who smiled at me in disbelief, a measure of their demoralization. The release of Nelson Mandela without the renunciation of violence P.W. Botha had required of him served to put the slogan that had carried Mandela through 27 years of imprisonment on the lips of ordinary white South Africans, and worse still, maybe in their minds: I mean the notion that the so-called violence of the government, usually called apartheid for short, justifies murder and terrorism, a simplistic view of Western history more current in our universities than in the townships of South Africa.

South Africa is a difficult country to visit because almost everything you see contradicts, or at least raises questions about, what you have heard. I went there for a three-week visit in March, almost two years after I had completed *Prisoners of a Dream: The South African Mirage*, a book that had turned out an unwitting defense of this country I had never visited. I went to see the living country with the dread that I would have to acknowledge horrors I had denied in writing but that a visit would force me to see. Once there I found that the country was better than I expected, and even harder to understand. Some of the best South Africans I met told me the country bewildered them also. I was moved by how often I was asked what I thought of them. Almost nobody I met spoke as if he had the answers.

I came to South Africa little more than a year after Mandela was released and the ban lifted from the ANC, SAC, and other terrorist groups on February 2, 1990—"Red Friday," as some of the tougher-minded people I met called it. Nineteen-ninety was a year accurately perceived to have turned everything upside down, most of all the way people spoke and thought, the hardest thing to change. But I met nobody who sounded as if he were repeating a party line, except occasionally someone in government.

The most dangerous tendency I saw was the tendency to reject the entire past, especially on the part of Afrikaner political leaders, whom a South African journalist described as "tooling around the country on bended knee crying *mea culpa, mea culpa*." This wholesale rejection is extremely dangerous because unless South African leaders know the strengths of their past they will not be able to face down the increasing irrationality of the present. The very capacity of ordinary Afrikaners, the obvious backbone of the country, to doubt themselves, and to admit they may have been wrong, in part, without repudiating themselves, testifies to the strength of their past, not to its weakness. I met many people who were as much for change as they were against negotiations with the ANC, an attitude that shows up markedly in government polls not only of whites, but of coloreds and Indians also. By April 1991 there were signs of disillusionment with the ANC even among blacks, disillusionment the terror in the townships probably kept largely silent.

One of the best journalists I know in South Africa says the country is in a revolutionary situation, probably a cor-

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rect judgment. But it is a revolution nobody really wants, not anybody in the country, at any rate. The ANC, after any number of membership drives, probably has no more than one hundred and fifty thousand members, in contrast to the Inkatha Freedom Party's one million members, among them at least fifty thousand whites. Moreover, ANC strategy has not changed, only the tactics. In fact, ANC violence has continued and even increased since the ban was lifted, a fact the ANC denies and the government ignores. By the end of 1990, the worst year of violence since the beginning of reform, there were ten killings a day. The killing increased precipitously in the two weeks following the ANC's supposed renunciation of violence on August 6. (The words the ANC actually used were "suspension of violence," words P.W. Botha and the foreign minister had rejected in 1986 because they implied no more than a cease-fire the ANC could cancel at will.)

Numerous black leaders were murdered, including about one hundred fifty Inkatha leaders; an important editorial writer for *The Sowetan*, the largest newspaper in South Africa, who had opposed the ANC; and rival terrorist leaders in the Pan-Africanist Congress (PAC). There was also a marked increase in attacks ignored by the Johannesburg police. The press, like the government, did not want to hear any evil about the ANC—with the exception of *Business Day* and *The Citizen*. To my astonishment the press even criticized the government for not moving quickly enough on reform, as if the only obstacle to change lay in the minds of government ministers.

In late 1990 and 1991 the ANC began to force the government to recognize ANC men instead of the elected town councillors it had been killing and terrorizing since 1984. The attack on the township governments was paralleled by a systematic attack on the governments of most of the homelands. Everywhere the aim was to intimidate and destroy black leadership independent of the ANC, and with regard to the townships, to make the government complicit in this destruction. The release of Mandela meant increased suffering for the blacks, suffering Mandela probably wanted to harden them and to increase their sense of abandonment by the whites.

To gain control of the townships the ANC exploits the government's compassion and remaining sense of responsibility. After Mandela's release, the refusal to pay rent and electric bills that had occurred sporadically since 1984 spread wildly to many townships. Many townships were forced to recognize the ANC after the medical authorities ordered the restoration of power to prevent outbreaks of cholera and typhoid that might break out because power shut-offs also cut off water. The final twist: recognition of the ANC did not necessarily mean payment of bills. "What other country in the world do you know where millions of people do not pay their electric bills and rent?" a young Afrikaner woman asked me, amusement lighting her eyes.

The primary responsibility for the clashes between the ANC and Inkatha lies with the ANC, especially in the townships. If the government will not control the ANC, the Zulus and other blacks will. "Only the blacks are now fighting the communists," a tough young white missionary told me. In a sense the ferocity of the Zulus in the townships measure the extent to which the government is out of touch. Somebody in the country has to know where freedom is. Buthelezi has put the responsibility for the violence squarely on the blacks, while Mandela instead has tried to blame it on the government, calumny that the media did not swallow.

At a prayer breakfast on March 7 in Durban, Buthelezi said he regretted the violence, and wept. The questions on everybody's mind were: had he wept spontaneously (as if tears could be anything but spontaneous)? And was this weeping a confession of weakness? (In the Transvaal—a rougher, more unforgiving post is hard to imagine—I heard one of Inkatha's men, Musa Myeni, more than once announce to whites that weeping did not necessarily mean weakness.) In his speech Buthelezi observed that the time was not yet ripe for reconciliation and repentance, but he also pointed out that the blacks themselves had much to admit to. He meant that the situation in South Africa was not the exclusive work of the oppressors but also of the oppressed, who had not known how to fend for themselves. I could hardly believe my ears.

Buthelezi profoundly hates violence, but as early as 1985 he also argued for the rationality of fighting back. He is a man, in short, who can live with contradictions in his soul. This capacity to endure contradiction makes it possible for Buthelezi to understand that the distinction between real negotiations with limited aims and negotiations that mask a transfer of power depends on faith, a word that he does not have to utter to make its presence felt in South Africa.

Not even a week later, on March 12, with the country still wrapped in the riddle of his tears, Buthelezi faced De Klerk and delivered another remarkable speech, this time upon the occasion of De Klerk's trip to Kwa Zulu, the first visit of any South African head of state to the homeland. He said he had never taken up violence because he had thought change possible in South Africa without violence. He probably meant that change was *only* possible without violence. He meant also that he had always known the Afrikaners could be reached.

He praised De Klerk for his readiness for the reconciliation that had transformed the country, but he criticized him severely for his almost exclusive attention to the ANC. He pointed out that any partnership or entente with the ANC would lead to the destruction of both the ANC and the National Party. He argued that if the whites really want to share power they must deal with the actual black leaders, leaders that they have to respect. He meant also that nothing short of dealing with these few leaders will cut the ANC down to size and show the extent of its fear of responsibility. A South African friend had pointed out to me in my first hours in South Africa that he suspected the government feared the real black leaders, perhaps the most profound observation I heard during my trip. Buthelezi told De Klerk the same thing to his face. He meant that De Klerk feared the spread of freedom, an understandable and even a rational fear, but one that has to be faced openly, for otherwise the country will be vulnerable to even greater destruction than freedom could bring.

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The choice De Klerk and his government face is between men who have respected the Afrikaners enough never to hold a knife to their throats, and those who do hold a knife. But choosing between them does not mean excluding the ANC from negotiations, as Buthelezi himself emphasized when he insisted on keeping the ANC "in the peace process."

—*Leo Raditsa*

THE HOPI INDIAN Reservation of northeastern Arizona is no place for strict adherents to the doctrine of the separation of church and state. The 8,000 or so present-day Hopi, unlike members of many Native American societies, have cautiously preserved much of their traditional culture and belief; most Hopis are inducted into secret religious societies by adolescence, and six months out of the year are given over to a succession of rites honoring the *katsinam*, the Hopi gods. In secular life, however, the Hopis have been inclined not to let religion stand as an issue, choosing instead to find common ground in endless disputes with the surrounding Navajo nation and the federal government. Indeed, many prominent Hopi politicians are Mormon, others Catholic or evangelical Christian.

If the Hopi traditionalists have their way, however, the Tribal Council—which administers millions of dollars annually from federal grants, investments, and extraction revenues from the vast Peabody Coal Company mines nearby—will be abolished, and the tribal constitution of 1936 declared invalid. In their place, should the traditionalists succeed, each of the ten Hopi villages will be governed by *kikmongwim*, the hereditary religious leaders who exercised absolute power in pre-reservation days.

The traditionalists have accused the Tribal Council and its chairman, Vernon Hopi Masayesva, of having "broken faith with the Hopi people," a gravely serious charge. More pointedly, they have asked the hated Bureau of Indian Affairs to disband the council, audit tribal finances, and allow the revival of *kikmongwim* power.

The last traditionalist uprising, after years of factional dispute, took place in 1906, when the *kikmongwim* and their followers declared the village of Oraibi a sanctuary of the true native religion and invited sympathizers from other villages to move there. An armed clash with nontraditional villagers ensued, and the so-called Hostiles packed their bags and founded a new town, Hotevilla, now the largest settlement on the reservation. As with the Civil War in the American South, the memory of conflict is still fresh.

Whether the neotraditionalist Hopis have much chance to push their program through is anyone's guess, but certainly the mood on the Hopi reservation is changing. The work of Anglo anthropologists and social workers who once swarmed there is increasingly subject to tribal refereeing and approval, and some scholars have been declared *personae non grata*. Ceremonies like the Hopi Snake Dance, once popular tourist attractions that brought substantial revenue to the tribe, have recently been closed to non-Hopis, as have sections of the reservation.

Those Hopis who long for a revival of theocracy may well carry the day, given this new isolationism. Only the forthcoming tribal council elections, now scheduled to be held in November of this year, will tell.

—*Gregory McNamee*

GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY, the foremost Jesuit institution in the United States, one that was called the "alma mater of Catholic colleges in America" by Pope Pius IX, and a university that boasts of a renowned Bioethics Institute, has recently allowed an abortion-rights group, GU Choice, access to the benefits extended to all student groups. These include such relatively mundane matters as

GREAT TOPICS, GREAT ISSUES

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Caught in the Cash Nexus — April 1991 — Irving Horowitz and Mary Curtis on "bottom-line" thinking and national productivity, Josh Ozersky on the seduction of cable's Nick at Nite, and Thomas Molnar on why European unification will never occur. Plus Samuel Francis on the European New Right, George Carey on the present health of the Constitution, and Frank Bryan on the case for Vermont's secession.

U.S.S.R.: Crack-up or Crackdown? — June 1991 — Andrei Navrozov on Soviet deception and the liberation of Eastern Europe, Yuri Maltsev on the unveiling of Soviet myths, Arnold Beichman on Gorbachev and reform, Jay Kinney on the state of Soviet propaganda, and Thomas Fleming on the lessons America can learn from the Soviet Union. Plus Jeffrey Tucker on enterprise zones, and Matthew Scully's review of Carl Rowan's autobiography.

Southern Writing — March 1991 — George Garrett on the state of Southern letters, Madison Smartt Bell on the short story, Dabney Stuart on Fred Chappell, Fred Chappell's story "Ancestors," and poems by James Seay and R.H.W. Dillard. Plus Henry Taylor and Kelly Cherry on Southern poetry, George Core on the literary quarterlies, and Steven Goldberg on the teaching of sociology.

Conservative Movement: R.I.P.? — May 1991 — Six views on conservatism by Wick Allison, Charley Reese, Clyde Wilson, Murray N. Rothbard, Howard Phillips, and Donald Devine. Plus Samuel Francis on the failure of American conservatism, Florence King on misanthropy, Chilton Williamson on the history of isolationism, and Peter Stanlis' vindication of Edmund Burke.

The Promise of American Life — July 1991 — Chilton Williamson on the cultural and environmental arguments against increased immigration, Richard Estrada on the impact of immigration on Hispanic-Americans, Thomas Fleming on how Ellis Island has superceded Jamestown and Plymouth Rock, and novelist Edward Redlinski's account of emigrating to America. Plus Milton Rosenberg on Paul de Man and J.O. Tate on the music of Ignaz Friedman.

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computer and mailing privileges, but they also include more substantial benefits such as hosting events and speakers funded with university funds.

In a letter sent to every member of the Georgetown community, Dean of Student Affairs Jack DeGoia defended the decision, claiming that it balanced both a commitment to free speech and the "moral tradition of the Roman Catholic Church." He was one of the few, either in or out of the university, who was convinced by this logic. Archbishop of Washington James Cardinal Hickey denounced the decision, many alumni have withdrawn funds, and four canon lawsuits are pending—one each by students, faculty, alumni, and concerned laypersons—in order to dissolve the university's relationship with the Catholic Church formally, as it has already been done informally.

The dean of student affairs, however, is only the front man for the university's president, Fr. Leo J. O'Donovan, S.J., who made the final decision. Fr. O'Donovan has defended his action in terms of preserving "academic freedom" and as a logical outgrowth of the "dynamic tradition of Jesuit education." He argues that the university is not "recognizing" the pro-abortion group (terminology that was discarded after the debacle with the homosexual-rights group a few years ago) but is merely providing a forum to discuss the "choice" debate, including (as Dean DeGoia put it) "the moral and legal status and rights of the fetus." Apparently, it is naïve to suppose that a university led by a theologian of a Church that has condemned abortion for two millennia would be clear as to what those rights are.

With this decision, made during the quincentennial of St. Ignatius of Loyola's birth, as well as the 450th anniversary of the founding of the Jesuits, the elite of the Society have demonstrated how little they care for the ideas of its founder and how little they respect the Catholic students and parents who pay thousands of dollars to be educated by these "soldiers of Christ." Georgetown has paid for lectures by Molly Yard and presentations by two men who wish to have the first legally recognized homosexual marriage in the District of Columbia. (Their case, incidentally, is being handled in part by faculty from the Georgetown University law school.)

The circumlocutions and obfuscations of Dean DeGoia and his superior would be humorous if the stakes were not so high. So while the abortion-rights activists exult, and as the press and the pundits hail this decision as a victory, not for free speech or academic freedom, but for NARAL and its allies (who in recent years have targeted Catholic colleges), DeGoia and Fr. O'Donovan appear to be the only ones fooled by their reasoning.

—*Jerry Russello*

Principalities & Powers

by Samuel Francis

Just because it looks like a Republic and quacks like a Republic doesn't mean it's really a Republic. In ancient Rome, after Julius and Augustus Caesar got through with the civil wars, proscriptions, and purges that spelled death to the remains of the old Roman nobility, the state still looked and quacked like the republic it had been in the days of Cincinnatus and Cato the Elder. There were still consuls and vestal virgins and all the other trappings of the old republican constitution. There were still law courts and elections. There was still the shell of the old pagan religion of the sons of Romulus.

But everyone knew it wasn't so, that a century of demagogues and dictators had ruptured the republican duck, that the Caesars had finally polished off the reality of republican government and set up their own sweet little autocracy. "Despotism, enthroned at Rome," wrote historian Ronald Syme in *The Roman Revolution*, "was arrayed in robes torn from the corpse of the Republic."

So it is today in the United States. The Constitution still exists and remains a standing topic of Fourth of July oratory. We still have elections and even the vestiges of that aristocratic balance wheel, the electoral college. We still have republican (but even today, not really democratic) representation in the Senate.

But, despite the persistence of these republican forms, the reality is quite different—a mass democracy in which elected officials are more and more irrelevant and corrupt as their powers and duties are usurped by bureaucratic elites that cannot be removed. Despotism, masked in republican costume, is not yet enthroned, but already it whispers sweetly in the ears of those who sit in the consular chairs of the leviathan state.

Why did the American Republic die, and why can't it be restored? The generation of Americans at the time the Constitution was written was immersed in republican thought and principles, and the Framers consistently tried to establish a republic that could avoid the anarchy, demagoguery, and tyranny to which most previous republics—in Greece, Rome, Renaissance Italy, Holland, and England—had succumbed. But, if the republic they did establish is in fact moribund, either they made a mistake or else something has happened in the last two hundred years that they never anticipated.

Writing on the different schools of republican political thought that permeated the United States in its infancy, historian Forrest McDonald notes that virtually all of them shared a common set of beliefs. "The vital—that is life-giving—principle of republics was *public virtue*," a term that rang rather differently from its resonance in modern ears.

> Not coincidentally, *public*, like *virtue*, derives from Latin roots signifying manhood: "the public" included only independent adult males. Public virtue entailed firmness, courage, endurance, industry, frugal living, strength, and above all, unremitting devotion to the weal of the public's corporate self, the community of virtuous men. It was at once individualistic and communal: individualistic in that no

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> member of the public could be dependent upon any other and still be reckoned a member of the public; communal in that every man gave himself totally to the good of the public as a whole. If public virtue declined, the republic declined, and if it declined too far, the republic died.

Americans were divided on the question of exactly how public virtue could be preserved and institutionalized, but Southern republicans in particular tended to insist on its concrete social and economic roots rather than, as New England Puritan republicans did, on its purely moral and religious supports. In the "agrarian republicanism" of the South, writes Professor McDonald, "virtue, independence, liberty, and the ownership of unencumbered real property were inextricably bound together . . . ownership of land begat independence, independence begat virtue, and virtue begat republican liberty."

There was, in short, what historian J.G.A. Pocock calls a "sociology of liberty": liberty was not merely something that could flourish in a vacuum because everyone wanted it; it blossomed only when and if the citizens were socially independent—if they owned their own property, ruled their own families, ran their own farms and businesses, bore their own arms in their own defense, took responsibility for their own failures and mistakes, and earned and enjoyed their own rewards, then and only then could men govern their own selves, as individuals or as a people, as a republic.

The fierce attachment to the ideal of independence in classical republican thought is the reason republicans didn't (and don't) much like what is today called "Big Government" or its brother, "Big Business." Bigness means dependency. In the 18th century, bigness meant the swollen dynastic states of Europe, with their courtiers and pensioners begging their livings from the monarchs and their mistresses. It meant entrenched aristocracies, established churches, protected guilds, privileged monopolies, entailed estates, absentee landlords, enclosed lands that once belonged to independent yeomen, and crazy, crooked, dirty cities where dispossessed yeomen herded together to form mobs that ran amok whenever their masters failed to feed them on time.

It was not Europe's lack of "opportunity" and social mobility or the mere fact of inequality that disgusted most republicans so much as it was the swallowing of independent men and institutions by the dynastic leviathans of the age. There couldn't be a republic in 18th-century Europe because its rulers as well as its ruled were not independent and had long since been smothered by the corruption, sycophancy, and slavery that dependence breeds.

It can be argued (and it may well be true) that at least some of the Framers were not enchanted by the prospect of old-fashioned republican virtue and its rather muscular vision of social independence, that Hamilton and Madison in particular entertained visions of a more grandiose state that would elevate the nation in wealth and power, and that they essentially redefined republicanism so as to accommodate their ideas and ambitions.

Indeed, it was so argued by the anti-Federalists and their successors, and for the first seventy years of the young Republic's life, the scale and purposes of the national government were the principal issues of political debate in the controversies over the Tariff, the National Bank, "internal improvements," and slavery. The debate came to an end in the Civil War, when the advocates of a national state dedicated to filling the pockets of the citizens triumphed in the tread of the legions of the gentle Abraham.

Be that as it may, by the end of the 19th century, the American Republic remained intact, as did the social independence and public virtue on which it rested. Prior to World War I, writes Robert Nisbet, the main contact most Americans had with the federal government was at the post office, and until the bonds of industrial and technological conglomeration were forged, Americans—or at least the middle-class core of American civilization—retained the social, economic, cultural, and political independence that made a republic possible.

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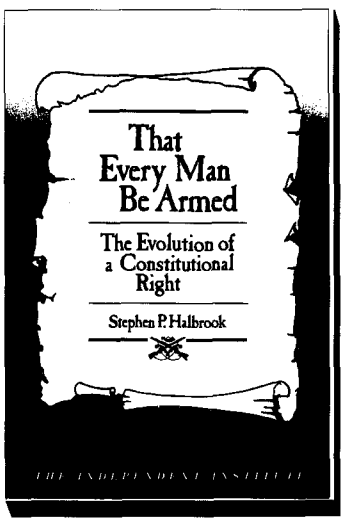

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in Big Government, Big Business, and Big Culture—have increased the span of organizational control far beyond the compact scale on which republican independence is possible and much farther than even the dynastic states of the *ancien régime* could comprehend. The American middle class today is dependent on corporations, unions, universities, and the national state itself for its income, and it is income—not an ethic or culture such as the 19th-century bourgeois middle class possessed—that defines the contemporary middle class.

The megastate and its tentacles touch and twist at every joint of our lives, and their operations are directed by permanent and largely invisible bureaucratic and managerial elites, not primarily by officeholders or independent property owners. Those who hold office spend much of their time trying to shovel federal fodder into their constituents' troughs. Mass media and mass cultural organizations in education and religion bind virtually all Americans into the same vast audience, poked and prodded by the same images, ideas, information, and misinformation to emit the same mental and emotional responses.

At the end of the 20th century, Americans have been absorbed within and become dependent on massive organizations and technologies that are far too large, too complex, and too distant for most of us to control or even to influence. Under that kind of dependency, the social and moral discipline that makes personal and republican self-government possible withers away.

Hence, the rise of mass organizations and the elites that run them and our own dependence on them have paralleled the explosion in social breakdown—crime, suicide, drug use, sexual excess and deviation, the brutalization of women and children, the collapse of families and communities, the pursuit of hedonism and immediate gratification, the glorification of the sick, the weak, and the weird. Mass society breeds dependency; dependency breeds corruption; and corruption breeds slavery. When independence and public virtue decline too far, the republic dies, even though despots may robe themselves in its garments.

Once the sociology of liberty is destroyed, it cannot be restored. Once the institutions and habits of independent discipline have withered, they do not naturally blossom again. Most Americans today are content with the megastate, the cult of consumption that a bureaucratized economy encourages, and the titillations, fantasies, and diversions of the mass media. The only discontent most of us have with the megastate is when we have to pay for somebody else to get more from it—in welfare, services, subsidies, tax breaks—than we get.

Democratic politics in the leviathan state is never about dismantling or reducing leviathan but always about forcing somebody else to pay for what we want from it. A mass democracy of interest groups, lobbies, ideological movements, and opinion clusters replaces the "unremitting devotion to the weal of the public's corporate self" that animated classical republicans, and the engorgement of leviathan is accelerated by the twin engines of a bureaucratic elite intent on enlarging its own power and the mass voting blocs it feeds, just as 18th-century demagogues fed their mobs. Unlike a republic, mass democracy doesn't restrain power; democracy unleashes power.

Except for a few right-wing eggheads, no one seriously contemplates restoring the republic; no one seriously wants to because no one has any material interest in it. Hence, the republic will not be restored.

Those few who remain attached to republicanism thus find themselves in the position of republican theorists like the Roman historian Tacitus and Niccolò Machiavelli, both of whom had seen their republics gurgle down the drainpipes of history. Both of them understood that republican liberty is not something you get by just wishing for it or believing in it, that in the absence of the public virtue on which republicanism is grounded, you cannot have liberty.

Tacitus had the good fortune to live in an age when the incumbent Caesars were not stark-raving lunatics but relatively benevolent despots, so he didn't need to worry too much about the more unpleasant aspects of gilded slavery. Machiavelli, who was imprisoned and tortured by the gangsters who took over Florence after the fall of its republic, perhaps worried more, and he had a more immediate grasp of what happens when a republic is corrupt and dying.

At that point, he wrote, "it becomes necessary to resort to extraordinary measures, such as violence and arms, and above all things to make one's self the absolute master of the state, so as to be able to dispose of it at will." Machiavelli understood that this kind of authoritarian rule was not a real solution or a restoration of liberty but simply the natural consequence of corruption; "for men whose turbulence could not be controlled by the simple force of law can be controlled in a measure only by an almost regal power."

The consolidation of political, economic, and cultural power on just such a regal scale has in fact largely occurred in the United States already. The question that the dying Republic yields, therefore, is not whether the Republic will be restored but rather how those Middle Americans who were the nucleus of the American Republic, who retain the vestiges of public virtue and who now find themselves the victims of the new imperium, can displace the elite that now prevails. The issue, in other words, is: who, in the wrecked vessel of the American Republic, is to be master? ◈

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Class Notes: *Rocky Mountain Ramble*

by Tom Disch

The poor, if they are self-possessed, may share
These views, provided the self they possess
Is reasonably becoming. Read Hemingway
To see how it's done. He was the paid companion
Par excellence. In his democracy of skiers
And good shots, where a simple guide may be
Manlier than many millionaires, arête
Is the password. Wit is not called for here,
And those who live by it, in an atmosphere
Of crystal, silver and swift repartée, would here
Be out of place. Here language is "honed down"
To the basic palaver of a Greystoke,
Whom even apes may apprehend and must obey.
No wonder Papa's books are assigned to all classes.
Practice such protocols and *you* may learn
To be a ski instructor too, exalted to a like degree,
Sharing the platonic form of Millionaire.
But be aware there is a price to pay, not just
Wit's richer vocabulary and its license to be snide
About *jeunesse dorée*, but the obligation to risk
One's life on a regular basis, to taste the self-
Apotheosizing *vin extraordinaire* of mortal danger.
Drunk on such brew, laurels seem spontaneously
To wreathe one's brow. What did Dryden say? None
But the brave, none but the brave, deserve the fair.
And what better proof of bravery than to have returned
Alive from the perilous jeep-ride or the theater of war?
O to have skied the Plunge and have the fact
Be known to one's beholders! It is a wine
Past all compare. Drinking it, one *must* believe
In the divine right of kings. We are then kings
Ourselves, and heirs of empires.

So much for the brave: what of the fair?
What of August's meadows at the top
Of the trail? What of these butterflies? What of
These many-aspened galleries of timeless art,
The true Conceptualism of the rampant eye
Snapping Monet after Monet in the stillness
Of these higher altitudes, above the crags
Where eagles dare—though, really, where's the daring
Of it for an eagle? They must feel quite at home
Up here. See how they ride the breezes languorous
As Cleopatra on her barge. Rarely is there need
To rapture prey, and the hours would pass away
Almost wholly in contemplation, were it not
For the flies and the sudden discovery amid
These pastoral vistas of a mining camp,
Abandoned, slowly turning into scree.
Here men enjoyed the mountain air who were
Neither kings nor Hemingways. Do they weep
There where they've gone to their reward
To see their tenements so forgotten and forlorn?
Would any modern Goldsmith mourn
Their loss? Goldsmith!—the very word
Is like a bell to toll me back to my hotel
In the valley far below, to all the comforts
And confusions, the names and dates, the daily news
And unpaid dues, and terms of sufferance,
Thence to the city we have named our home,
Inapprehensible Reality.

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Anna Mycek-Wodecki

Science Fictions

by Thomas Fleming

While the genre of science fiction is hardly a century old, the roots of science fiction go deep into our history. Men have always told stories, and in telling them they have inevitably recast the world of their perceptions into something easier to grasp, more beautiful or more terrible than it really is. At bottom, we are all creative liars, above all to ourselves, and remember our ordinary childhoods as enchanted realms, as so many dream days spent in secret gardens or hectic conflicts in Never-Never-Land. The source of all creative deceit lies in our memories, which act as funhouse mirrors, magnifying the importance of our experiences; they are "magic casements opening on the foam of perilous seas in faery lands forlorn."

In a religious world, it is inevitable that we should create, according to the talents of our race, myths of impossibly beautiful and powerful beings whose deeds and antics serve as models for conduct and warnings against presumption. In an age dominated by politics and war, the greatest fiction will be passed off as military and political history, and in this the age of science, it was virtually impossible not to subjugate science to the uses of the imagination.

Nothing is more boring than to go back and read the early examples of science fiction, and it is fitting that a literary genre that has produced more bad writing than any other (not excepting women's romances) should have a prize named after one of the worst writers of the century, Hugo Gernsback. As a general rule, the best science fiction has been produced by writers who refused to limit themselves to the genre. Wells' best work is his serious novels, *Tono Bungay* and *Mr. Polly*, not *The Time Machine* or *War of the Worlds*. C.S. Lewis was a scholar and essayist, who happened to write a great sci-fi trilogy. Poe (if one can include him at all) was primarily a poet, and the best novel of the future in living memory is Walker Percy's *Love in the Ruins*.

Even the most celebrated professionals in the field have tended to do other things as well. Tom Disch is as well known (in some circles, at least) as a poet, and Philip K. Dick wrote mysteries. Ray Bradbury writes "straight" from time to time, and one of his finest books is *Dandelion Wine*, a nostalgic look at the Midwest of his boyhood. Harlan Ellison is eager to repudiate the label and wants to be known only as a writer.

I've never accepted Duke Ellington's dictum that there are only two kinds of music—good and bad—but it can be applied to writing. In all the various niches of pop culture there are insiders eager to claim special rules and privileges for song lyrics or mysteries or comic book art, but such claims are a little like the claims of any special interest group threatened with competition. As works of literature, most science fiction has always been little less than dreadful, and the billions of pounds of pulp has tended to drag down the standards of even the most ambitious writers.

If science fiction is almost all junk, why should anyone waste time sifting through the rubbish in a usually vain search for semiprecious stones in a dimestore setting? In my case, I have a hunger (mostly unsatisfied) for science fiction, one that was aroused in my early teen years when escape from this planet and this century seemed an attractive option. (It still does, but dead languages are a more satisfying vehicle than spaceships.) The mere fact of this appetite among so many people points to the deeper reason for reading science fiction. In a world in which the reigning myths are all derived from science, it may only be through science fiction—however stupid or poorly written—that we can make sense of those parts of our world that science made. Perhaps we can only understand science's lies by inventing lies about science.

I am not thinking so much of the obvious anticipations of

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technological advancement—even Gernsback described moving walkways—as of the moral and political dimensions of life lived according to the rules and plans drawn up by the scientistic state. In fact, a great deal of science fiction has been written in a libertarian, anti-imperialist vein. Robert Heinlein was a moral and political libertine who attracted a following among Randians and other libertarians. It's easy to see the attraction: anyone who thinks Rand is a great novelist would worship Heinlein. Poul Anderson has several fine stories that can be read as briefs for communal anarchism, and Kurt Vonnegut, who was probably better doing science fiction than pretending to be the great writer, had the last word on equality in his story "Harrison Bergeron."

At his best, Vonnegut is a dystopian writer who constructs future nightmares in order to expose the dangerous tendencies in our own age. The best political science fiction is always of this type. Gulliver's voyage to Laputa and Lagado is an honorable ancestor of the satiric subgenre of science fiction. Wells' best contribution is also a voyage to an island, *The Island of Dr. Moreau*, on which a brilliant scientist has discovered a means of hastening evolution. By inflicting great pain upon pigs and monkeys, he can transform them into a ludicrous parody of human beings. The original film version, *Island of Lost Souls*, is a brilliant adaptation with Charles Laughton as Dr. Moreau, almost giggling as he describes the pain he has caused, and Bela Lugosi as a monkey-man deputized as Law-sayer to the bestial Adams. "What is the law?" bellows Laughton. "Thee law eez," intones Lugosi, who had learned only to mimic the sound of English, "Thee law eez to walk on two legs, are we not men?" And all the two-legged pigs and monkeys and cats grunt and jibber in chorus: "Are we not men?"

In the end the beasts rebel. They kill the doctor and burn down his laboratory. We are what we are, Wells reveals, and the attempt to transcend our nature produces nothing but grotesque abominations. "In the end," Wells' scientist tells his colleague, "the study of nature makes us as remorseless as nature itself." When Wells wrote the story he was still, in the official parts of his mind, a socialist who believed in progress through better chemistry, but the real Wells, the novelist Wells, had always known better. "No man is a hypocrite in his pleasures," Dr. Johnson once remarked, and no good writer is a liar or ideologue when he is doing real work. A nasty communist like Brecht or Sartre can still write plays that contradict his politics, and it is remarkable how many "liberal" or "leftist" science fiction writers have written tales imbued with a reactionary imagination.

Perhaps the most celebrated science fiction writer of the past several decades was the late Philip K. Dick. I haven't a clue to Dick's politics, but he posed as a cultural rebel, a drug-using degenerate. But what does one make out of his novel *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* In Dick's very unpleasant dystopia, most animal species, including insects, have been eliminated, and man's only serious competition are the androids that have been exported and restricted to off-world colonies. In the impoverished world that men have made in their own image, the highest status symbols are pet mammals, although most middle-class people have to content themselves with robotic imitations that look like the real thing. When a group of renegade androids kill their masters and return to Earth, Dick's hero, a "bladerunner," is sent to dispose of them.

In the film version made by Ridley Scott, the androids are possessed of some dignity and humanity, and in the end Harrison Ford leaves his wife to elope with an android who has only just realized what she is. In Dick's gloomier novel, however, the androids hate all life. One of them amuses herself by cutting the legs off a spider, and it is the beautiful android who pushes the bladerunner's pet goat off the roof. The androids' great plot against humanity consists in an attempt to prove that the new religion of empathy—"Mercerism"—is bogus, and they express their resentment in the classic language of minority rights groups: "It's that empathy . . . Isn't it a way of proving that humans can do something we can't do? Because without the Mercer experience we just have your word that you feel this empathy business, this shared group thing. How's the spider?"

The really terrifying quality to the novel is not the almost-human androids but the almost-mechanical humans. The bladerunner's wife spends her days hooked up to a device that can create moods, but the net effect is a subhuman apathy that prevents her from dialing any emotion that could release her from an autistic slump. In the end she purchases a supply of electric flies for a toad with a "perpetually renewing puddle" and a service contract for periodic tongue adjustments.

On the metaphysical level, Scott's film trivializes the book, but it also picks up hints of social themes and turns them into major themes. In *Bladerunner* Los Angeles has become one giant ghetto of interbred blacks, Hispanics, and Orientals who speak a disgusting amalgam of languages called Cityspeak. Earth is an overpopulated sewer teeming with human rats, and all the best and brightest have abandoned the planet.

In a society poisoning itself on dishonesty, dystopian fiction and films may be the only means we have of considering the social and moral diseases that we are inflicting upon ourselves. They are inherently anarchic and prepare the mind for rebellion against an oppressive system. Utopian fiction, however, has the opposite effect. Plato's *Republic*, More's *Utopia*, *Walden Two*, and *Ecotopia* (the fantasy of an ecofascist state in the Pacific Northwest) were all meant as criticisms of the societies in which they were written, but the goal of any utopia is perfection, and not an organic perfection but one that can be engineered by human craft and discipline. An engineered state, no matter how well-intentioned and no matter how humane the architect, will always be totalitarian. It is the product of a single mind or a single ideology that reduces all the complicated intentions of other beings down to instruments for the greater good. B.F. Skinner's *Walden Two* is boring enough to read. Imagine what it would be like to live there. Imagine the numbers one would have to kill in order to create a society as uninteresting as the headquarters of a major corporation.

All art, as the ancients realized, is a form of representation, of "imitation" and not merely of things as they seem. Plato was wrong to stigmatize poetry as the imitation of things in the world that are themselves imitations of the true reality. As some Neoplatonists recognized, it is possible for

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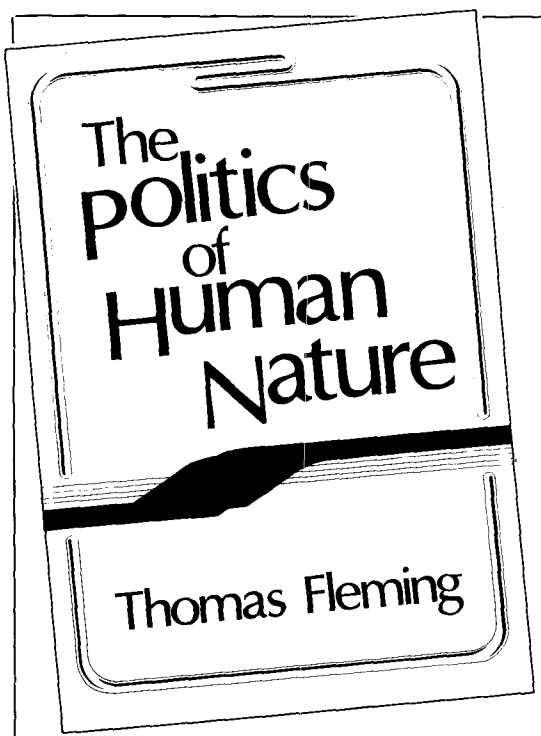
the poet or the artist to imitate the divine ideas themselves and to convey some sense of that reality that underlies everyday experiences. In a crude sense, the artist "imitates," that is to say represents, the divine act of creation, and his greatest temptation is to confuse his own role with that of the Creator. When the writer plays God and constructs an alternate reality filled with exotic worlds, strange creatures, and new laws, he cannot help trapping himself in the mirror of his own self. This is the reason why all utopias and most science fiction are boring: the natural world—whether created or evolved—is the result of an infinite mind operating through an infinite number of inextricably linked interactions, but Utopia is the product of a single finite mind with a very limited range of experience. Utopias are to the world what narcissism is to marriage.

But utopias are worse than sterile: they are terrifying in a cold sort of way. Cutting himself off from both God and nature, modern man has repeatedly engaged in science fiction experiments on human society. Imagine a world without property, without competition, without status, without war. "Imagine everybody sharing all the wealth." The longer I stare into the mirror of my finite self, the less able I am to see anything that is not me. In constructing a world in my image, I lose the capacity to understand any other world.

My choice for the most alarming piece of political science fiction in recent years is George R.R. Martin's *Sandkings*. In some other world lives a self-indulgent playboy who mistreats the creatures he buys at a shop specializing in exotic pets from every galaxy. Finally he purchases a sort of giant ant farm with the injunction not to stir the creatures into violence or aggression. The playboy, however, cannot resist the temptation to play God, and as the creatures construct their cities, he destroys some and spares others. He sets one group against another and enjoys the spectacle of war and devastation. When his victims work for days on a giant statue, he is surprised to discover that the face is his own.

Ultimately, the insects metamorphose into powerful man-sized creatures with all the violence that their lord has instilled into them. Martin's allegory can be taken as a reflection on certain kinds of religion made in man's image, but it is also a comment on the whole utopian project of creating new worlds. The rulers of Romania learned to their cost what sort of people they had made in their own image, and the planners and technocrats of America, so eager to change the condition of humanity, will with any luck have to face the consequences of their own narcissism.



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The Flesh's Wedding

by Tom Disch

It is with the flesh, as with most other marriages,
That a time comes, a middle age, when the bond loosens.
Not a divorce, necessarily—fondness may persist—
But there is not that knot of simple union
That appetite ties in our honeymoon years.
We begin to get fat in a different way than we got fat
In our pococurante thirties, when, however much
We ate or entertained, we still worried
About waistlines and went to a gym. Now we know it's no use.
We have become painfully aware of all the ways our flesh
Betrays us, and those who can afford the preposterous fees
Begin to visit exotic professionals—periodontists,
Plastic surgeons, barbers with a sideline in toupees.
The divorced often seem to suffer less,
But you will notice how many of them become alcoholics
And smoke like chimneys, clandestine anchorites
Flagellating livers, lungs, and hearts in lieu of
Spouses lost. The happiest are those who've never wed,
Who always recognized flesh as an encumbrance
Or simply didn't recognize it and jetted ahead,
Snug in the 747's of pure reasonableness, sipping
The vile complimentary wine, oblivious of everything
But the fluffy clouds below and the books in their laps.

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IF THESE CONTEMPORARY ADVENTURE STORIES REFLECT ANYTHING, THEY REFLECT
THE SOCIETY IN WHICH THEY WERE
AND IN WHICH THEY ARE CONSUMED. AND IN BOOKSTORES OF ANY SIZE
LINES OF PAPERBACK ADVENTURE NOVELS, GLOWING WITH THE SHELVES

Anna Mycek-Wodecki

Adventure Fiction

The Machinery of the Dark

by Robert Sampson

Adventure fiction is vigorously alive. Although virtually ignored by critics outside specialist newsletters, the genre has long been a dominant force both in bookstores and in Hollywood. Such adventure films as *Die Hard, Jaws,* and the Indiana Jones epics draw millions of viewers. Tom Clancy's technological thrillers and Robert Ludlum's volumes of struggle and terror reach best-seller lists with predictable regularity. And in bookstores of any size, lines of paperback adventure novels, glowing with ferocity, pack the shelves.

Whether movie or novel, each adventure story contrives, in its own way, to reflect the anxieties of our times and the preoccupations of our culture. On page and screen certain subjects are mercilessly reiterated: the dangerous cities, Cold War teeterings at the brink of thermonuclear war, ethnic violence, drug violence, gun violence, the terrorist assault, and theft of the singular technological secret that will expose the nation to humiliating defeat. Central to the fiction are problems of evil, ethical conduct, and moral obligation. Coupled with these is an obsessive interest in high technology and weapons, spilling difficult acronyms across the page. And there is, as well, a decided emphasis on characters accomplished in violence, who deal directly and savagely with contemporary problems.

The narrative action may be driven by the poisoned subtleties of the Cold War or by criminal conspiracies nested at the heart of society. Or, perhaps, the evil is a devastating natural force compounded by human greed and shortsightedness. Whatever the darkness at the core, the adventure novel presses grimly toward its direct confrontation. Peter Benchley's 1974 novel *Jaws* is a prime case in point. As in other adventure stories by Benchley, the subject is the intrusion of evil into paradise and the consequences of denying the presence of that evil. In *Jaws,* that evil is as concentrated as a boil. But commercial interests deny the need for action, and delay permits the evil to ravage unchecked. A similar situation develops in Benchley's *The Deep* (1976). Honeymooners skin-diving in Bermuda discover sunken gold, and when they secretly attempt to secure the treasure they are set upon by hijackers. Secrecy compounds their problems, and only after much anguish do they earn a bitter victory. Similarly, in *The Island* (1979) there lurks a secret colony of pirates who have ravaged the Bahamas for generations. Scores of ships have simply vanished. As in *Jaws,* no one will acknowledge the obvious,

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and once again delay intensifies the problem. When eventually the pirates are rooted out, the personal cost is agonizing.

The novels of Robert Ludlum also address the excision of evil, although it is evil less apparent than in Benchley's work. The Ludlum novels turn on the painful, slow exposure of concealed conspiracy. This is a world of contemporary problems and the terrible silent running of the machinery of the dark: the coordination of drug routes, the channeling of arms to terrorists, the struggles for power within the intelligence community, the corrosion of racial prejudice in high government circles, the evasion of accountability. Ludlum's characters bring to these matters intelligence and the habit of abstract thought. When they experience violence, they are astonished and shockingly vulnerable. And violence comes often, the more horrifying because of Ludlum's exact observation of its physical consequences. Unlike the facile gunmen of motion picture and paperback, who kill and are not changed, Ludlum's people are permanently marred by their confrontation with evil, whether it appears as direct violence or the equally dark faces of corruption and intellectual arrogance. Ludlum has remarked that "you write from a point of view of something that disturbs or outrages you. And that's what I do. I admit to being outraged—mostly by the abuse of power by fanatics. The extremes bother me, right or left. . . . I disapprove of violence, that's why I show pain for what it is. When my characters get hit, they hurt."

His 1973 novel *The Matlock Paper* involves a university professor in the gradual exposure of a secret organization that has turned to crime for extraordinary reasons. The action of *The Chancellor Manuscript* (1977) twists among national intelligence agencies during a search for J. Edgar Hoover's missing personal files, and, in doing so, exposes the frightful corruption created by the abuse of power. Corruption as a consequence of power also drives *The Icarus Agenda* (1988), an examination of illicit armament sales and Mideastern terrorism. From deep concealment, a small group toys with the destiny of bitter Arab states. The situation is handled by Ludlum with customary intelligence. At the novel's close, the blunt-spoken President of the United States remarks:

> I don't give a damn how pristine [the prime conspirator's] motives were; he forgot a lesson of history that he above all men should have remembered. Whenever a select group of benevolent elitists consider themselves above the will of the people and proceed to manipulate that will in the dark, without accountability, they've set in motion a hell of a dangerous machine. Because all it takes is one or two of these superior beings with very different, *unpristine* ideas to convince the others or replace the others, and a republic is down the drain.

Preservation of the Republic is a central concern of nearly all recent adventure fiction. Accepting the postulate that the country is continuously under attack within and without, this genre has reflected nearly every major subject of national concern and national debate. Each Cold War crisis, each technological advance or threat, from hostage taking to the Star Wars initiative, has triggered a fresh burst of novels.

Most of these novels are less rigorously realistic than Ludlum's work. Most routinely deal in extreme positions. They derive considerable emotional effect from the suspicions and unrelieved fears of the Cold War years. National security, they warn, is continually at risk. These fears achieve unsettling reality in stories that describe how the Russians hurry to prepare a nuclear strike when, for various glibly explained reasons, the United States is vulnerable. Or how the United States and Russia plunge toward a confrontation that will inevitably escalate to thermonuclear exchange.

Common to this novel form is the assumption that the United States and Russia are so evenly matched technologically that a single new development will thrust one side or the other to an inferior military posture, as in Craig Thomas's *Foxfire* (1977). The novel describes how the United States steals a Russian high-tech fighter so advanced that it is equipped with thought-controlled armament. In the sequel, *Foxfire Down* (1983), the crippled fighter, grounded in neutral territory, must be salvaged before the Soviets arrive. Both novels are dense with details of mission planning, aerial combat, and the performance of aircraft and weapons, either extrapolated or imagined. A reversal of the idea appears in Dale Brown's *Day of the Cheeta* (1989), when Russia steals a high-tech fighter from the United States. A similar situation occurs in his *Flight of the Old Dog* (1987), when Russia steals Star Wars technology and prepares to test it at a remote site. Since preservation of that technology is absolutely vital to national security, the United States must mount a suicide mission to destroy the site. The immediacy of the action, the continuous flow of apparent insider information, glosses over the unreal premise and the improbable decisions initiating the action.

As the novels earnestly reiterate, contemporary society is unstable and corrupt. Freedom and democratic processes have been compromised away by lawyers, politicians, inept national leaders, and special interest groups.

Two later versions of Cold War fiction have appeared in the specialized world of original paperback series novels. The first variation features small combat squads fighting subversion in contemporary settings; the second revives the 1950's science fiction nightmare of nuclear doom, placing the story amid America's ruins in a post-atomic war world.

Jerry Ahern's *The Survivalist* series (which began in 1981 and continues to the present) evokes a glum picture of violence, heroism, social and political fragmentation, and desperate efforts to hold together the final few frail threads of civilization. *The Guardians*, a series by Richard Austin, also begins with America wrecked. Through the rubble a hardboiled four-man survival team searches for "The Blueprint for Renewal," a secret plan for reviving the country.

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The current *Domestic Warrior* series by Ryder Stacy is set one hundred years in the future with the United States having been occupied by the Red Army and the KGB, while a tiny resistance movement fights underground.

Less given to pessimistic futures, and mildly more credible, are recent novels of small-squad military action. These are also unremittingly, brutally violent. The combat is covert, the time the present, the scene most often the Third World. Members of these fighting teams, *Able Squad* and *The Hard Corps*, among others, appear mildly invulnerable. Their opponents are not, and die graphically and in huge numbers, Communist fanatics and terrorists to a man. The salient operating characteristics of each weapon used is lovingly cited. The prose tone is harsh, contemptuous, and well informed of death in its more disagreeable forms.

Contemporary adventure fiction has fervently embraced the practice of alternating bursts of action with bursts of technical and insider information. This emphasis on detail, particularly technical detail, is not merely to enhance the reality of the narrative, for the seeming precision of this information and its aura of exact knowledge is meant to impose a measure of order upon the irrationalities and confusions of the reader's present. Indeed, contemporary adventure fiction employs technical description as an incantation against the instabilities of our current culture.

The ultimate refinement of this method is found not in the paperback adventure fiction but in the novels of Tom Clancy. Characteristically, his work depicts the complex reality of the technical system and its impact on the human world. That world is, itself, subject to social, psychological, and emotional protocols (including those laws by which human activity is organized and directed). The world of technical systems is equally subject to rigorous laws, and functions in parallel with the human world; but the reality of the physical conditions within an operating system—the pulses and transients and deep harmonies of the coupled systems—remains nearly always unseen. By demonstrating that invisible interaction, Clancy discloses an additional level of reality, deepening and enriching the novel's effect.

Each of his novels gives an insider's view of contemporary problems and the social mechanisms designed to deal with them. Each establishes a central situation to be solved by planning and use of specific technology within realistic constraints of time, funding, and human ability. His pages brim with devices of advanced technology, described in the linguistic shorthand of the insider. His *Patriot Games* (1987) is a prime example:

> On opening the clipboard he revealed a typewriter-style keyboard and a yellow Liquid Crystal Diode display. Outwardly it looked like an expensive clipboard, about an inch thick and bound in leather. "It's a Cambridge Datamaster Model-C Field Computer. A friend of mine makes them. It has an MC-68000 microprocessor and two megabytes of bubble memory . . . [meaning] that the memory stores up to two million characters—enough for a whole book—and since it uses bubble memory, you don't lose the information when you switch it off."

In *Patriot Games* a radical IRA splinter group targets a CIA analyst for assassination. The planning, logistical movement, technical equipment, and emotional stress of both sides climax in a fury of realistic suspense. *The Cardinal of the Kremlin* (1988) involves a top American spy in the Kremlin who has secured information on Russian defenses against Star Wars technology. As the KGB closes in on the cardinal, a rescue effort is mounted, again described with rich precision of detail. In the 1989 novel *Clear and Present Danger*, Colombian drug lords have murdered three U.S. officials and a covert team of two hundred men is organized to plunge into the jungles and perform an interdicting strike.

The genre's emphasis on detail, however, is not limited to the technological world. At times the subject is the intricate inner workings of powerful organizations, clandestine or otherwise, such as the Mafia. Recognition of the Mafia as an internal Empire of Evil began with *The Godfather*, Mario Puzo's 1969 novel of social and moral corruption. That same year saw publication of *War Against the Mafia*, the first volume of *The Executioner* series by Don Pendleton. Here Vietnam veteran Mack Bolan returns from war to find that the Mafia has destroyed his family. Bolan begins a one-man battle of vengeance. For 12 years and nearly forty paperback books, he has used military hardware and military tactics against the Mafia leaders and gunmen, its hidden fortresses and pleasure palaces. One of the most violent and successful of adventure paperback series, it continues today.

Variations followed as variations will in the series book trade. Not long after the first Bolan adventure came Stuart Jason's series, *The Butcher*. The hero, a Mafia hit man, quits the organization (which promptly offers a huge reward for his death) and becomes a special undercover agent for the FBI. Thereafter he battles not only the Mafia but terrorists and others who would subjugate the world, a crescendo of menaces narrated in plain brown prose.

Although Mafia and Cold War themes continue to fill series books, repetition has slowly dulled their edge. Around 1980 a new enemy, terrorism, flashed to prominence. Even *The Executioner*, after nearly forty novels and a dozen years, turned from slaughtering the Mafia to leading a covert national security force. As in volume 39, *The New War*, his mission is to attack terrorism wherever it appears:

> The crazed animals called terrorists would like us to believe they are motivated by a higher purpose—religious fervor, patriotism, concern for the oppressed, the redressing of old wrongs done to colonial peoples. But in fact they are no more than common criminals, motivated by a madness for power, for self-aggrandizement. They're ruthless. And dangerous . . . like mad dogs they must be eliminated to protect the rest of the world.

While the subject matter of a Tom Clancy novel is much the same as that of the action adventure series, significant differences exist in levels of detail and development of situation and character. In part those differences result from the concentration that is required in paperback adventure fiction, which is shorter, offers a simplified reality, and pares away nearly all else but the action line. As a result, the principal characters of a paperback series tend to be

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sketched in powerfully simple lines. If not psychologically complex, they are sympathetic and often admirable. Through the shadow world of clandestine operations, they move confidently—Vietnam veterans, assassins, combat professionals. Above all, they are patriots, although they do not often speak of that. They are moral figures in an immoral world whose solid sense of obligation to their country sustains them as they struggle to uphold standards of decency and honor. Their fervor is disturbed by no concern that the means, often bloody and illegal, may contaminate their desired ends.

These characters practice violence because direct action seems the only solution for present ills. As the novels earnestly reiterate, contemporary society is unstable and corrupt. Freedom and democratic processes have been compromised away by lawyers, politicians, inept national leaders, and special-interest groups. The organizations set up to administer justice and protect the citizen no longer function. National collapse can be staved off only by dedicated men willing to fight for their beliefs, no matter what the personal cost.

For these reasons, principal characters of this genre tend to address similar problems in a similar way. They strike directly at a situation, whether crime in the street or corruption in high office. They bring blood justice for the public good. Their victims are unlamented. Mark Hardin, *The Penetrator* (fifty books by Lionel Derrick), is part Cheyenne and a Vietnam veteran who has made it his mission to eradicate evil. Lone Wolf, Jack Sullivan, *The Specialist* (ten or more novels by John Cutter), uses his finely honed combat skills to fight terrorists, criminal masterminds, and the Mafia. *The Death Merchant*, by Joseph Rosenberger, features Richard Camillion, a murderer for hire. Between murders, he immerses himself in classical music and difficult books, one of the few series characters to react to anything more cultural than ballistics tables.

In part, these deadly heroes sprang from the staggering success during the early 1960's of Ian Fleming's James Bond novels. These sparked a fad for suave secret agents, who enjoyed ostentatious living, lovely ladies, and extraordinary adventures. The action was seasoned by gadgets and bizarre opponents, that now familiar mixture. Of all Bond's rivals, the most successful has been Nick Carter of *The Killmaster* series. Numbering nearly two hundred and fifty volumes, these describe the violent adventures of N3, an American espionage agent who chops down fanatics with facile zeal in the interests of world peace. A far colder world is presented in Donald Hamilton's series about secret agent Matt Helm. Like Bond, Helm is employed by a clandestine government organization created to handle severe threats to national security. Helm is empowered to assassinate when necessary. He does so frequently, with dour professionalism. The novels, spare and hardboiled, are touched by a kind of resigned disillusionment.

The device of a secret agency protecting America's security through judicious assassination swiftly embedded itself as a fictional convention. Of the many novels built around the secret agency and its lethal personnel, *The Destroyer* series has been one of the most successful. Certainly it is one of the oddest. Begun in 1963 (but remaining unpublished until 1971), the series was the creation of Warren Murphy and Richard Sapir. Quirky, opinionated, an astonishing mixture of comedy, social satire, fantasy, and explicit violence, the series is blithely disrespectful of authority in all forms and causes of all types. The series' lead characters, Remo Williams and Chiun, master of the art of *sinanju*, are professional assassins. With sleek efficiency, they put to death astonishing numbers of simplistic figures who personify contemporary problems, again illustrating the lure of the direct solution.

If these contemporary adventure stories reflect anything, they reflect the society in which they were created and in which they are consumed. Perhaps they simplify and distort or overdramatize, but invariably the fiction conveys a message from the deep. It speaks of anger and dismay, impatience at the confusion of things, and the desire for immediate solutions to the problems of the turbulent present. It speaks of success and bravery, hails the wonders of technology, and honors skill and intelligence and men who live for principle. For all its easy violence, adventure fiction honors life.

LIBERAL ARTS

LITERATURE AND UTOPIAS

Perhaps the change I describe, from the revolt of the nineteenth century to the realism of the twentieth, could not be better measured than by the distance between two dates; the day on which Mr. H.G. Wells, laying the foundations of the first of his Utopias, declared that its first principle should be that Original Sin is a lie—to the day when Mr. Aldous Huxley, heir of the great scientific house in its next generation, wrote that the mediaeval mind was far wiser than the nineteenth-century minds, because it recognised Original Sin.

—*from* Sidelights on New London and Newer New York, *by G.K. Chesterton.*

LITERATURE AND FANTASY

The problem of the fairy tale is—what will a healthy man do with a fantastic world? The problem of the modern novel is—what will a madman do with a dull world? In the fairy tales the cosmos goes mad; but their hero does not go mad. In the modern novels the hero is mad before the book begins, and suffers from the harsh steadiness and cruel sanity of the cosmos.

—*from* Tremendous Trifles, *by G.K. Chesterton.*

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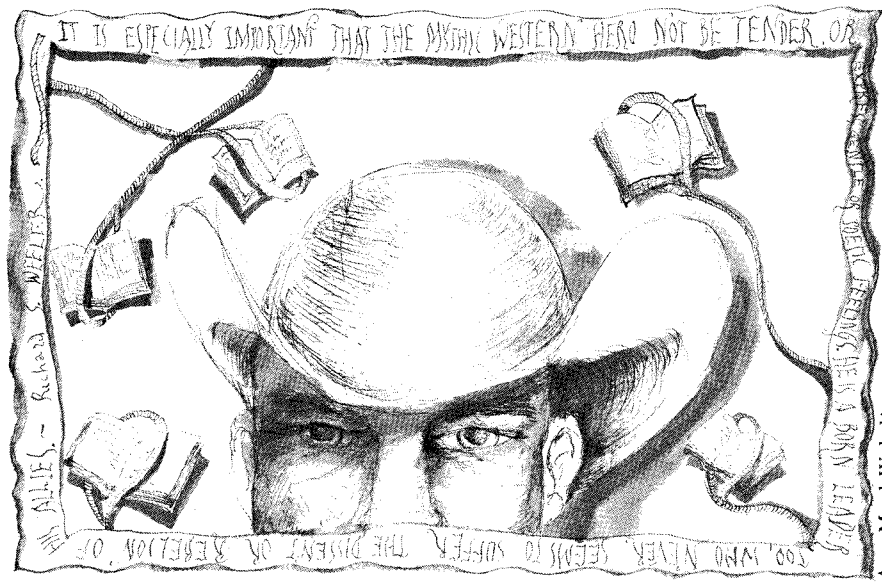
Writing Offbeat Westerns

by Richard S. Wheeler



The Western novel has always been hedged about with more conventions than any other category, with the possible exception of women's romances. I've often puzzled about why that is so, and even after years of thinking about it, I don't have any good answers. I know that some of it has to do with the fact that the classical Western is mythic in nature. It is not just a story; it's an affirmation of our history, expressed in a special way.

In the traditional Western justice is done, at least if justice is defined in a certain way. The small rancher wins over the ruthless cattle baron, and thus confirms the right of freeholders to own the earth and profit from their holdings. In the mythic Western, victory comes at last to the character who is the most splendid example of fantasy manhood; the one who is the best warrior, cowhand, brawler, and shootist. He's also the most honest, audacious, loyal, temperate, courageous, and truthful.

The mythic Western story doesn't employ real characters, but magical ones who represent what the readers want to be; it is the readers themselves who stalk through the pages, vicariously gunning down evil, winning what amounts to private wars, and revenging themselves for past wrongs. That's why the mythic stories are so hedged about with conventions. It would never do to raise the moral ambiguities of the real frontier, and confuse or discourage the reader.

In other areas of publishing, times change. But Westerns don't change. Publishers of hardcover library Westerns have allowed a little freedom recently, but the mass market houses that spin out the novels that stuff the drugstore racks have essentially the same conventions as ever. The readership of mythic Westerns seems to be stable, and as long as that is the case, publishers don't want to experiment.

To any veteran reader of Westerns the conventions seem so natural that it seems hardly possible a Western can be written in other ways. All authors of Westerns are well aware of them, and know they must heed them, or publishers will reject their novels. Foremost among these conventions is the requirement that the story occur sometime between the Civil War and the 1890's, roughly when the frontier vanished. Another requirement is that these stories be about loners in armed conflict—for example, the young rancher who must fight off the predations of a villainous cattle king. Another important rule is that the central figure be male. With very few exceptions over the years, Westerns have been built around male enterprises or male warfare, as in the gunman-type stories. Very few Western heroes are married. Such women as appear are sketchily portrayed and aren't important to the plot. Yet another tradition is that there be no substantial love interest, although love is not totally forbidden.

Another powerful convention is that the male protagonist must be heroic. His character is commanding. He knows what to do: he rarely wonders what course of action is wisest, or weighs questions of good and evil, or wonders whether he's a fool. As is true of most mythic characters, he doesn't grow or change as a result of his trials, but triumphs on the basis of his innate superiority over his antagonists. Emotions are largely tabooed: the mythic Western hero should properly be poker-faced and stoic, a Clint Eastwood type, and avoid anything resembling uncontrolled rage, tears, shame, tenderness, or laughter. You'll never see a Western hero feeling self-pity. He never blames scapegoats for his troubles.

It is especially important that the mythic Western hero not be tender, or express gentle or poetic feelings. He is a born leader, too, who never seems to suffer the dissent or

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rebellion of his allies. Somehow, he commands the amazing obedience of women. (I cannot think of a single category Western in which a strong, sympathetic woman resists the advice of the protagonist and follows her own counsel to the end of the story. In traditional Westerns only the "bad" or antagonist women are willful.) Still another tradition governing the classic Western is that the hero must be portrayed only from the outside, usually through action. He's no Hamlet. Readers usually are not made privy to a hero's private torments or doubts, or even his rejoicing and dreams, lest the flow of action be interrupted. As a result, we rarely see a Western hero in the fullness of his character. We see him only from without.

I have described, in fact, the classic Louis L'Amour Western hero and story, and because of his awesome success, few publishers have deviated from his approach. That great author, who dominated the field for so many years, was both an asset and liability to the Western story. At one point in the early 80's, he was virtually the only author of single-title Westerns being published, and he kept the category alive at a time when publishers had largely abandoned it. I cherish two of his stories, *Flint* and *Hondo*, and admire several others.

But if he was the rescuer of the category, he was also unwittingly responsible for leaving it in a straitjacket. His very success at writing the mythic, romantic Western ensured that the mass market houses would rarely deviate from his formula stories about a frontier West that never really existed. This was no fault of his own, but the product of his astounding success. And sad to say, I believe his influence radically narrowed the Western market, driving away women readers, and especially better-educated readers who might have enjoyed a story about real, flawed mortals wrestling with the dangers of a real frontier and wilderness. His influence has been so profound that in his later years the type of Western story accepted by imitative publishers narrowed more than ever; so much so that gifted authors who earlier wrote of the West in broader strokes—I'm thinking of Ernest Haycox in particular—would now find their manuscripts unwelcomed because they didn't fit the L'Amour matrix.

As much as I have loved the Western story all my life, I found these ironclad rules daunting. When I began writing Westerns in the mid-70's, I yearned to tell a more realistic story, about real people challenging the awesome difficulties posed by the wild West. A person of ordinary courage promised to be a better protagonist than the mythic type whose victory is foreordained. There was a much better possibility of suspense, or story tension, where a hero or heroine has those qualities found in most people: courage and fear, cowardice and honor, skill and clumsiness, moral conviction and occasional weakness. This sort of protagonist would grow or shrink, but certainly not remain the same at the end of the story. And the possibility of his or her defeat would add to the underlying tension of the story.

In the course of my research I discovered something else: the historical West was far better material, more colorful and fantastic, than the richest stories of the romantic Western novelists. For a brief, unique period in the 19th century, a flood of people streamed into unknown and dangerous lands. This extraordinary event captured the imagination of the country—indeed, the world. Far from being exhausted by the innumerable Western novels, films, and TV series, the real frontier West is virtually untouched, virginal material available to any novelist. The traditional mythic Western has used this material only as a backdrop to its real theme, male pecking-order struggles between loners out upon a lawless land where social rules don't apply. But the historical West was rarely about that. The mythic Western is so far removed from the reality of the frontier that the aficionados of the old West rarely read paperback fiction; instead, they buy history and biography from the Universities of Nebraska and Oklahoma presses. The stories and characters in the academic literature are much wilder, more astonishing, and more vivid than anything on the drugstore racks.

I had one additional goal when I set out to write Westerns. I wanted mine to appeal to a more educated, literate readership. That meant doing two things: one was upgrading the vocabulary I would use in the Western to a level commensurate with any serious literary novel. And along with a richer vocabulary, I hoped to achieve a gracious use of metaphor and figures of speech. But here, too, I butted against still another convention. Traditional Westerns are written in the most basic and utilitarian language, and editors have ruthlessly stricken any usages that might have appealed to a literate reader. (I've had a copyeditor systematically downgrade the vocabulary in one of my stories.) My other purpose was to deepen my characters, work within their heads, but in ways that didn't slow the story. There are proper ways to do that, mostly by making the characters' calculations a part of the plot itself.

I've had the great good fortune to have editors who have permitted me to write nontraditional Westerns, including two series that totally escape the traditional Western format. Both are set very early, in the 1840's and 1850's, which I find much richer than the post-Civil War era. The 1840's saw the Oregon migration, the Mormon migration, the California gold rush, the Mexican War, the annexation of Texas, the rise of the buffalo robe trade, the settlement of the Oregon dispute with Great Britain, the development of steamboating up the Missouri, and much more: wagon trains, the Santa Fe Trail, buffalo, the first great Western Indian wars, the explorations of an unknown continent by John Fremont, and the transition of weapons from muzzle-loaders to breech-loaders—for starters. And yet, incredibly, that whole decade, and the one following, are taboo to New York publishers with Western lines. To this day, you will not find traditional Western novels set in the 1840's and 50's in any traditional line, including those of Fawcett, Pocket Books, Bantam, Warner, NAL, Berkeley, Dell, Avon, Charter, or, until recently, Zebra. If you find such a novel, put it in your safe-deposit box.

Well, I'm a crank. I love the West. I especially love the West of the 1840's, which was by far the most colorful and fascinating decade in American history. I also have been bemused by the sheer improbability of events in the West. Things regularly happened that are beyond the wildest imaginings of novelists. But most of all, I believe the Western story has never been told. All those thousands of mythic Western novels haven't told it; neither have the

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mythic Western films, as good as many of them are.

The result of all this crankiness in me has been a number of novels that are about as far removed from the typical Western as possible. In one, *Winter Grass*, the hero is a Harvard-schooled Boston Brahmin. In another, *Sam Hook*, there's a venal sheriff too fat to ride a horse, so he covers his county in a buggy. In *Richard Lamb*, the hero is a former mountain man, now a trader to the Blackfeet, who'd been a classics professor at Amherst. My new Pinnacle series, *The Rocky Mountain Company*, will be the first, as far as I know, to deal with the early buffalo robe trade. In my novel *Dodging Red Cloud*, the heroine is a clever con artist who matches wits with a rascal. In yet another, the hero is a farmer who's clawed a fortune in gold out of a Montana gulch, only to lose it to road agents. Is he stoic? No, he falls to the ground, weeping. But ultimately he, and the other protagonists, discover things more important than gold. That one was *Fool's Coach*, which won the Spur Award for Best Western Novel in 1989, and I believe its unusual ending had something to do with that.

One could scarcely imagine Western heroes, or situations, farther removed from the L'Amour approach. And yet they are succeeding, more or less. They are profitable, though they don't capture large audiences. Maybe someday they will: these books are being read by people who otherwise don't read Westerns, which means I'm expanding the category. I've written traditional stories too, most recently one that reworks the *Shane* theme about the man familiar with weapons who doesn't wish to use them again. But the nontraditional story is my joy.

The mythic Western is so far removed from the reality of the frontier that the aficionados of the old West rarely read paperback fiction; instead, they buy history and biography from the Universities of Nebraska and Oklahoma presses.

All of which suggests that it is possible to market Western stories that buck tradition. Some of the work of Elmer Kelton and Will Henry lies outside the stock category approach. Likewise, the Western stories of Doug Jones, Ben Capps, and some of Jack Schaefer. (I am not in the same league as these men, but their work has inspired and influenced me.) There have always been Western authors who have bucked tradition. But they tend to be the exception, and I'm sure that most Western novels being published today adhere to the powerful conventions I've described above.

Still, change is in the air. It began, actually, with Larry McMurtry's Pulitzer Prize-winning Western novel *Lonesome Dove*, back in 1985. That book is a watershed in Western fiction. Mr. McMurtry was careful to point out that his novel isn't really a Western, and he was quite correct about that, even though the novel contains all the elements of a classic Western story, including an 1870's cattle drive, conflict with Indians, and cowboy lore. But the difference between *Lonesome Dove* and a category Western is profound and instructive.

One critically important distinction is that McMurtry's story is not about loner males in conflict, or justification of the male self through strength. In *Dove*, bonding is the theme. Some men, loosely bonded by ranching life in Texas, grow closer together on the long trail to Montana as they endure hardships. They grieve the death of any of their number, and express their grief in funeral ritual of a sort that is absent from category Westerns, where bodies lie unburied and unmourned. Friendships, loyalties, sacrifice, and love are profound elements in McMurtry's story.

McMurtry's characters wrestle with metaphysics, right and wrong, good and evil, theology, and God—all elements that don't usually exist in traditional Westerns. McMurtry's characters are therefore larger than conventional Western heroes. After Gus McCrea dies, the two women who loved him, Lorena and Clara, wonder where Gus's soul went, and what the experience of dying must be like, and along with their questioning the story acquires a grace and aching intensity unmatched by traditional stories.

There are no mythic heroes in *Lonesome Dove*. Captain Call and Gus McCrea are marvelously mortal, cranky, idiosyncratic, opinionated, bullheaded, tender, foolish, and wise. They make mistakes and are not so strong as to triumph over all trouble. They are, nonetheless, courageous, and empathetic as well. The women, Clara and Lorena, are as bullheaded and uncertain and bewildered by life as the men. And both antagonists, Blue Duck and Jake Spoon, are as complex as the protagonists.

Tenderness is important in McMurtry's story. One of the best scenes in both the book and TV miniseries involves a picnic in which Gus and Clara rediscover each other after years of separation, enjoying their reunion even while remembering old lovers' hurts. It was the first picnic I've ever seen in a Western story, after thirty-some years of reading them.

Except for a beginning so slow that it will defeat the impatient reader, *Lonesome Dove* is a model of what can be accomplished in a nontraditional Western story. Others worth studying are Will Henry's *I, Tom Horn*, Jack Schaefer's *Monte Walsh*, and Elmer Kelton's *The Good Old Boys*. All of these transcend the realm of the category story, can be considered literature, and are delightful, realistic expressions of frontier life.

I've been lucky enough to find publishers for my nonmythic Westerns, but that doesn't mean publishers are comfortable with them. They are all packaged as traditional Westerns, no matter what the contents. My story *Richard Lamb* was about an old man who has become an Indian trader after years as a mountain man. He has a flowing white beard and hair, and wears beautiful golden buckskins, elaborately fringed, and decorated by his Blackfeet wife. He has a white medicine horse. But on the cover of the Ballantine paperback, he has been transformed into a cowboy with a Levi jacket, jeans, boots and spurs, and a cowboy hat. The beard is there, but neatly trimmed down, and the flowing hair is gone. He sits on a golden-colored quarter horse. Another of my stories has a heroine who is

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something of a con artist. The Ballantine cover for that one features an Indian warrior on a rearing horse, waving a signal blanket. I get the feeling that my novels were smuggled into the line, and smuggled into readers' hands with a misleading traditional cover. These may be fine covers. They probably sell more books than a cover that truly depicts my story. But they are also an expression of the feverish wish among New York publishers that every novel they publish replay the old themes, for the same old readers. The packaging of my nontraditional stories says to me that New York publishers don't want to develop new markets or alter lines in ways that entice new readers to try them. It's worth noting that no publisher of category Westerns shifted the line toward McMurtry's way of telling a Western story, or even experimented with it.

A year or so ago, Ballantine decided to discontinue its Western line, and I suddenly found myself without a paperback publisher for my M. Evans hardcover Westerns. The Ballantine line had been profitable, my editor told me, but panic had stricken the Random House empire, and a lot of changing and cutting was going on. Through last winter and spring, my hardcover publisher began soliciting other paperback reprint houses about doing my stories. There were three for sale, two of which had been published. It was quickly made known to the various paperback houses looking at my stories that *Fool's Coach* had won the Spur Award.

Much to the astonishment of the people at M. Evans, the Western editor at Pocket Books rejected all three. *Fool's Coach*, he said, fell apart at the end. By falling apart, he meant that the heroes lost their gold. They should have blasted their way out with a big gunfight and kept their gold. That's how the mythic Western works. And the other two books, he explained in his letter to M. Evans, weren't Westerns at all! One of the books, *Where the River Runs*, involves a captain who takes a treaty-making party out to the northwest tribes in the 1840's—and is never seen again. His fiancée hires a guide and goes looking for him. The other one, *Montana Hitch*, is about a rancher in the 1880's who has wife-problems along with problems with rustling and neighbors who exploit him. But these weren't Westerns! One is set in the 1840's, so it's not a Western. A Western, remember, is a story that is set somewhere between the Civil War and 1890. The other has a hero with a bad marriage—so that's not a Western either! I've read hundreds of Westerns, and I can't remember even one in which the hero had a bad marriage. It didn't matter that both stories were set in the frontier West—in the estimation of the young Pocket Books editor, they weren't Westerns. And in a certain way, he's quite right. Pocket Books, more than any other publisher, hews rigidly to traditional Western stories. In fact, that is why the Pocket Books Western line is comprised largely of ghosts. That house specializes in dead Western authors, and you can't get more traditional than that. It is an odd quirk in the house that published *Lonesome Dove*.

In spite of the recent discontinuation or reduction of several Western lines, the frontier story is not in danger of extinction. The present turmoil is really an opportunity to write and publish new forms of the Western story, ones that will reach the broad national audiences that Westerns enjoyed in the days when the old *Saturday Evening Post* ran serialized Westerns that were enjoyed by people from all walks of life. A bold novelist, willing to research and write about the real frontier, use realistic heroes instead of mythic ones, and add literary graces to the genre, can capture a new market for himself and his publishers. The historical frontier is a virgin field.

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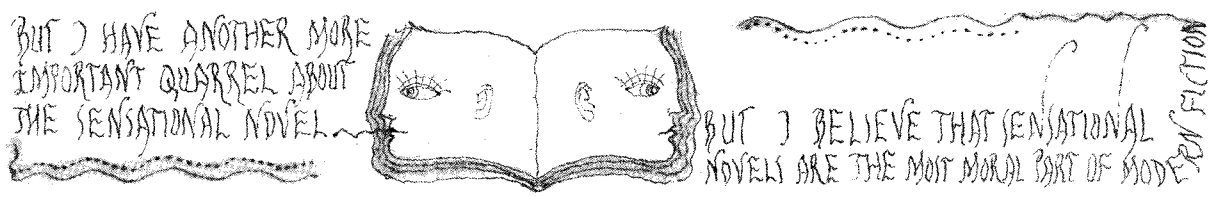
BUT I HAVE ANOTHER MORE IMPORTANT QUARREL ABOUT THE SENSATIONAL NOVEL
BUT I BELIEVE THAT SENSATIONAL NOVELS ARE THE MOST MORAL PART OF MODERN FICTION

DEFENDING PENNY DREADFULS

But I have another and more important quarrel about the sensational novel. There seems to be a very general idea that the romance of the tomahawk will be (or will run the risk of being) more immoral than the romance of the teapot. This I violently deny. And in this I have the support of practically all the old moral traditions of our civilization and of every civilization. . . . For the old Greeks a moral play was one full of madness and slaying. For the great medievals a moral play was one which exhibited the dancing of the devil and the open jaws of hell. For the great Protestant moralists of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries a moral story meant a story in which a parricide was struck by lightning or a boy was drowned for fishing on a Sunday. For the more rationalistic moralists of the eighteenth century, such as Hogarth, Richardson, and the author of *Sandford and Merton*, all agreed that shocking calamities could properly be indicated as the result of evil doing; that the more shocking those calamities were the more moral they were. It is only in our exhausted and agnostic age that the idea has been started that if one is moral one must not be melodramatic.

But I believe that sensational novels are the most moral part of modern fiction. . . . And it is, I think, the abstract truth that any literature that represents our life as dangerous and startling is truer than any literature that represents it as dubious and languid. For life is a fight and is not a conversation.

—from "Fiction as Food," by G.K. Chesterton

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Studies in Tyranny

by Alan J. Levine

"Tyranny, like Hell, is not easily conquered."
—Thomas Paine

Stalin in Power
by Robert C. Tucker
New York: W.W. Norton;
707 pp., $29.95

Stalin: The Glasnost Revelations
by Walter Laqueur
New York: Charles Scribner's Sons;
382 pp., $24.95

◆

Nearly half a century after their destruction, Nazi Germany and Adolf Hitler remain the objects of greater attention and hatred than do Stalin and his Soviet Union, although the extent of their crimes were similar and Stalin's regime was in some ways the more complex and challenging phenomenon. It is possible to view Nazism as a merely Central European phenomenon, so petty, provincial, and intellectually limited as to excite limited admiration; with its open repudiation of most of the civilized values, it did not pose any genuine or lasting moral dilemma to the rest of the world. Stalinism, by contrast, was widely deemed a "progressive" movement, had wide appeal, and gained many adherents and sympathizers throughout the world, including some of the most eminent intellectuals of the age. The "Thousand Year Reich" lasted just 12 years, and ended with Hitler killing himself in the ruins of Berlin as the city was taken by the Red Army. Stalin died in bed, still widely respected, still in control of an intact empire that included half of Europe and that has only recently come apart, nearly forty years later. That the Soviet Union, unlike the Nazi regime, never started a world war (although it came close at least twice) undoubtedly accounts for some of the historical disproportion. The leftist political bias of our century, from which Stalin profited so handsomely, accounts for much of the rest of it.

Anna Mycek-Wodecki

But there are other factors, too. As even vigorous opponents of both Nazism and Communism have noted, the Nazis may have been more simple-minded, but they were a great deal more colorful than their Stalinist rivals. While Hitler was a charismatic public figure and one of the great demagogues of history, Stalin was a cold-blooded, antisocial intriguer, reluctant to appear in public. He was so colorless that his mortal enemy Trotsky could recall him only as a "gray blur." As Walter Laqueur notes, his physique and personality do not appear in keeping with one of history's supreme villains.

The long-awaited second volume of Robert Tucker's superb biography concentrates wholly, and Laqueur's book on the "glasnost" revelations largely, on just 12 years of Stalin's extraordinary career: a span equal to the entire life of Hitler's regime. The period 1929-1941 was probably the time of Stalin's most concentrated villainy, which included forced collectivization and "dekulakization," the beginning of forced-draft industrialization, and the artificial famine of 1933. These horrors were succeeded by a calculated and false "moderation," the policy of the Popular Front and "antifascism," which disguised Stalin's true policy of seeking rapprochement with Nazism and bringing about a world war. The breathing space of the mid-1930's was merely the period in which Stalin laid the groundwork for history's biggest frame-up, as well as

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one of its biggest massacres—the Great Purges.

These were hardly completed when Stalin concluded the long-desired alliance with Hitler, an alliance that in the end backfired, disastrously. Stalin had miscalculated twice. First, in common with most of the world, he had assumed, in 1939-1940, that the British and the French would hold back the Germans, and that the war in the West would be a mutually exhausting stalemate. Second, in 1941 he fecklessly ignored the clearest possible warnings that the Nazis would attack. Just how complete those warnings were is only now fully clear; it has recently been disclosed that Schulenburg, the German ambassador in Moscow, betrayed Hitler's plans to Molotov in May 1941, explaining that his master intended to attack on June 22. In dealing with the era 1929-1941, Tucker has produced a masterpiece that offers a coherent explanation for many things that previously have seemed unfathomable. His interpretation is formidable even when it is difficult to agree with it, and it is noteworthy that Stalin emerges looking even worse than in previous biographies.

Tucker makes the strongest case yet for the view that Stalin's policy in later Weimar Germany was not a criminal blunder but a deliberate maneuver to help the Nazis to power and bring about an eventual world war. The policy that led to the Nazi-Soviet Pact was thus not merely a product of circumstances following Hitler's seizure of power (much less a last-minute improvisation after Munich) but had been fixed and consistently pursued since 1925.

Nor was the horrible course of farm collectivization just a solution—albeit the worst possible solution—to the genuine problem of collecting sufficient grain to feed the urban populace, as many historians have argued. Lenin's New Economic Policy was not at a dead end, doomed by an objective difficulty. Rather, Tucker stresses, the crisis was the planned result of deliberate policy. Stalin lowered prices for grain and raised those of manufactured goods as part of a scheme to provoke a showdown, impose collectivization, terrorize the peasantry, and gain forced labor for the industrialization drive. In the last few decades, it has been rather fashionable to discount the impact of planning and calculation by political leaders on the course of events, and to explain those events according to bureaucratic politics or to snap reactions made by individuals in situations that were suddenly forced on them. Whatever the validity of this view, it has no applicability to Stalin's Soviet Union. Stalin did not always get what he wanted, but what he wanted he planned for.

Tucker touches on two related critical issues. Was Stalin Lenin's heir, Stalinism being only a minor modification of Bolshevism, or did he break sharply with Lenin's ideas? And what was the relationship of the system Stalin created to that of earlier epochs of Russian history?

It has often been noted that Stalin's purges recall those of Ivan the Terrible, that farm collectivization was in some ways a revival of the serfdom imposed in the 17th century, and that Stalin's industrialization program recalls the forced modernization initiated by Peter the Great. These similarities, it is said, establish true "continuity" between the Soviet and pre-Soviet eras of Russian history. The Russian social system of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, whatever its other faults, had left these earlier horrors (which themselves belonged to widely separated epochs) far behind. By 1914, Russia seemed well on its way to "convergence" with Western Europe and North America. Arguments assuming that some sort of Russian archetype was unconsciously resurrected after 1917 have never been very convincing. But Tucker argues that there *is* a relationship between Stalinism and earlier events, and that the key to this relationship is discoverable in the mind of Joseph Stalin.

Tucker makes a strong case—much stronger than this reviewer would have believed—for a definite breach between Stalin's ideas and program and those of the majority of the Old Bolsheviks. The difference was not simply Stalin's greater ruthlessness and willingness to import into intra-party conflicts methods that Lenin and others had deemed acceptable against non-Communists. That Lenin and most of his colleagues envisaged a gradual transformation from small-scale peasant ownership and the NEP to collectivization and a "socialist economy"—not the overnight "second revolution" that Stalin imposed—has been generally accepted. But Tucker goes further. Stalin's need to become a hero of the revolution equal to or greater than Lenin could only be satisfied by a "second revolution." That, plus a strong tendency to paranoia and a devotion to an idealized self-image that prevented him from admitting that he could be in any way fallible, explains much of the history of the Stalinist era. After his wife killed herself (or he killed her in a rage), Stalin wished to dispose of blame for all that had gone wrong and to eliminate those who had known him when he was a minor figure and who knew very well that he was not an infallible genius. He also wished to pave the way for a pact with Hitler, which many Old Bolsheviks sensed would end in disaster. These considerations, and the aim of creating a new elite dependent on him and analogous to the "service nobility" created by Ivan IV, largely determined the targets and the extent of the Great Purges.

The social system created in the second revolution was in part a result of Stalin's understanding of Russian history. Tucker argues ingeniously, and on much evidence, that Stalin, unlike Lenin and the rest of the Old Bolsheviks, was a strong Russian chauvinist with a real, if peculiarly slanted, interest in Russian history. Stalin's powerful "transferred nationalism" (to borrow a useful phrase invented by Orwell) led him consciously to see Ivan IV's destruction of the old nobility, the bondage of peasantry, and Peter the Great's modernization program as efforts "prefiguring" a means to build a "socialist" system in Russia that did not occur to other Communist leaders. Later, it led him to revive elements of Russian traditionalism, to impose ranks, titles, and pay differentials, and to develop a "National Bolshevism of the right" similar in many respects to Nazism. Hence the great paradox that while no real continuity existed—nor could exist—his rule did recall the very worst aspects of earlier Russian history. The argument is an impressive one, although perhaps Tucker does exaggerate the differences between Lenin and Stalin. While the latter felt compelled to destroy his old colleagues, the fact is that he had reached the summit of power without incurring massive opposition or causing any sense of unease among most Com-

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munists, in or outside of the Soviet Union. Walter Laqueur's more conventional assumption, that Lenin's rule and the attitudes it fostered were likely to lead to something like Stalinism, is on this point more convincing.

It is notable that Robert Tucker declares that his interpretation was not basically affected by the revelations of *glasnost*; they have, he says, merely reinforced his views. Those revelations are the main subject of Walter Laqueur's book, which is, unfortunately, not quite up to Mr. Laqueur's usual high standards, and which shows some signs of hasty writing. Still, it contains a good deal of new information that Laqueur handles with characteristic clarity and common sense, although without arriving at any drastic departures from earlier interpretations. New data on the Great Purges, the uncovering of the NKVD's mass graves, the recalculation of the number of Stalin's victims—now calculated at up to 40 *million* by Roy Medvedev—and Stalin's attempt to make peace with the Nazis through Bulgaria in 1941 are all treated here. Laqueur also discusses (as in his previous book, *The Long Road to Freedom*) the bizarre alliance that has developed between the so-called conservatives within the Communist Party and groups on the extreme Russian nationalist right like *Pamyat*. The position of the neo-Stalinist bureaucrats needs no explanation, but the rightist groups, which perhaps have more popular support, present an intriguing problem. Their hatred of Lenin and Trotsky and their hostility to non-Russians, especially to Jews, has led to a peculiar sort of anti-anti-Stalinism. In the minds of these people, Stalin was not all that bad: he merely killed Communists (many of them Jewish) who had destroyed many good Russians, and his view of Russian patriotic traditions was essentially a sympathetic one. Their special devils are Trotsky and Lazar Kaganovich—the latter the sole important Jew in Stalin's entourage and the only one of his cronies still alive—rather than the monster from Tiflis.

Anti-Semitism apart, their argument that the *prominent* victims of the purges do not deserve much sympathy has substance. Still, "non-party" victims outnumbered Communist Party members, high and low, by nine or ten to one; while even before the purges, Stalin had far surpassed Lenin and Trotsky in his destruction of the *muzhiks*. *Pamyat* and similar groups have succeeded in the difficult task of adding some new thing to the history of political perversity in the 20th century; with any luck, however, it will remain no more than a footnote to that history.

Occasionally, Laqueur fails to come to grips with the issues. He rightly criticizes those Russian patriots who argue that there was nothing particularly Russian about Stalinism, which was just a local and severe case of a global phenomenon, "from Madrid to Shanghai." The trouble with this argument, of course, is that Stalin came to power *in Russia*; to ignore the fact is similar to insisting that the Germans bore no particular responsibility for Nazism because there were fascist groups in other countries, too. But, rather than point this out, Laqueur merely grumbles that "such theories lack conviction. If some Western intellectuals had voiced support for Stalin even in the late 1930's, it was because they knew little about contemporary Russia. Their support stemmed primarily from the assumption that Nazism was the main enemy and that Stalin's help was essential."

But an old hand like Walter Laqueur surely knows this is going too easy on Communist supporters in the West, who numbered far more than "some intellectuals" and whose motives can hardly be ascribed simply to anti-fascism. Many of the names Laqueur himself cites in this context (e.g., Henri Barbusse) had become outright Communists long before Hitler took power, and some remained so during the Nazi-Soviet Pact. The defense of civilized values hardly necessitated joining another totalitarian enemy—even had that enemy's opposition to fascism been genuine. It is surprising to see this tired old whitewash of Communists and their sympathizers laid on once again. Even as a reproach to feverish Russian nationalism, it is simply inappropriate. ◇

A War Memorial

by Tom Disch

The while they scrambled to escape
  The consequences of their crimes—
Torture, pillage, murder, rape,
  According to The Times—

Allah the Merciless prepared
  The banquet destined for Iraq.
"Let no expense, or life, be spared,"
  He bade. "And now, attack!"

For fifty miles and four lanes wide
  The hulks of trucks and gutted cars
Still fill the highway where they died
  Huzzahing, "Victory is ours!"

—*March 11, 1991*

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Lamentations of a Recovering Marxist

by Llewellyn H. Rockwell, Jr.

"Progress needs the brakeman, but the brakeman should not spend all his time putting on the brakes."

—Elbert Hubbard

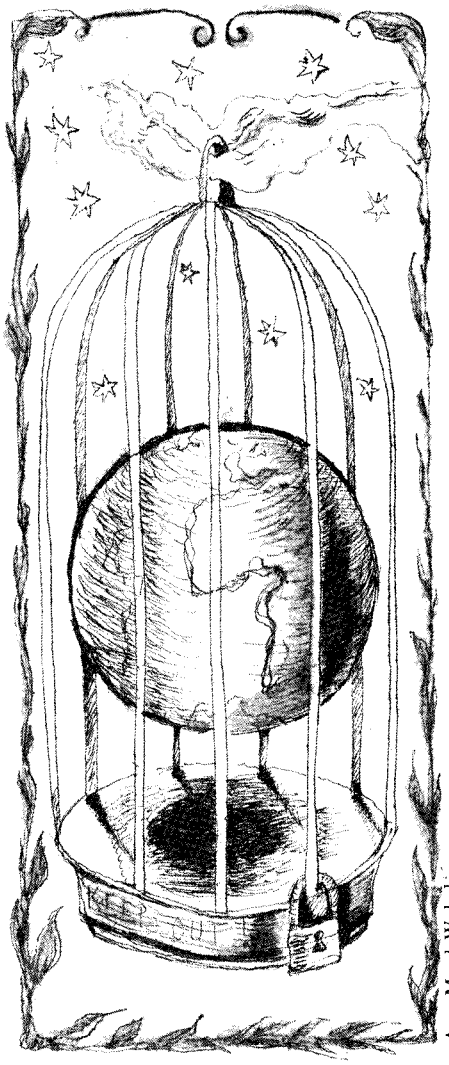
The True and Only Heaven: Progress and Its Critics
by Christopher Lasch
New York: W.W. Norton & Co.; 591 pp., $25.00

◆

The case for pessimism has been easy to make since Lincoln, and mandatory since Franklin Roosevelt. Today, not much is left of the Old Republic. As early as the 1930's, Frank Chodorov could describe Washington, D.C., as a painted prostitute. Today, it is a whore of Babylonian proportions.

We have become inured to perpetual decline. Most Americans are getting poorer. 2 Live Crew is getting richer. Criminals are victims. The innocent are nobodies. Third-graders learn to put condoms on cucumbers. Virginity is an object of fun. Manners are extinct. Blasphemy is a sacrament. AIDS is a civil right. Martin Luther King is an icon. Rodney G. King is an assistant icon. Max Lerner is a conservative. And European-American culture is—like that dead white male Columbus—to be shoved off the edge of the new flat Earth.

In the midst of this comes Professor Christopher Lasch of the University of Rochester to warn us, in *The True and Only Heaven*, against a belief in progress. Lasch is an important intellectual historian, and his book reflects his professional status. His thesis—that the idea of progress has caused immense harm to society and should and will be scrapped—is compelling to many people. His analysis of a whole raft of opponents of progress, from Ralph Waldo Emerson to Orestes Brownson, from Jonathan Edwards to Reinhold Niebuhr, is most useful. It is, in fact, a good adjunct to Robert Nisbet's magisterial *History of the Idea of Progress*.



Anna Mycek-Wodecki

The True and Only Heaven also reflects Lasch's paleoleftism. He tells us that the "capacity for loyalty is stretched too thin when it tries to attach itself to the hypothetical solidarity of the human race." He criticizes modern liberalism for promoting feminism, sexual freedom, and divorce, and adds that "to see the modern world from the point of view of a parent is to see it in the worst possible light." Lasch is still an economic leftist, however, and he draws upon cultural paleoism to urge conservatives to demand state limits to economic growth. Too many people, he believes, now agree with the "crude" idea "that the economy can indeed expand" and benefit "all society's members." This is Lasch's understanding of that harmful "belief in progress that has dominated Anglo-American politics for two centuries." Socialists used to promote their ideology as raising living standards. Now that Lasch, like other socialists, knows that socialism equals poverty, he wants us to believe that being poor is good for us, and for the "earth's finite resources." But the right still seeks to maintain "our riotous standard of living" at "the expense of the rest of the world (and increasingly at the expense of our own minorities as well)."

Everything earthly is finite, of course, but the Earth in its own right has no resources; they belong to man, and unless we put the United Nations in charge of their distribution, we are in no danger of running out of them. That is not what the environmentalists really worry about, however. "An Energy Glut in the Ground Imperils Ecological Hopes" ran a *New York Times* headline last fall; companies keep discovering vast new reserves of oil, coal, and natural gas, to the horror of the Greens. The intelligent use, or conservation, of resources can only be decided by property owners. That is why federal lands are overgrazed, or clear-cut and not replanted; why Yellowstone is allowed to burn over because fire from lightning is natural (whereas careless campers are arrested by Smokey the Bear); and why thirty thousand loggers and landowners are impoverished so that fifteen hundred birds can continue to live in the style to which they have become accustomed.

Nor do most Americans, outside of the rich and infamous in the imperial capital, have a "riotous" standard of living, thanks largely to the federal government. And while it is true that

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the sainted Third World and domestic underclasses do suffer from the warfare-welfare state, the vast bulk of the bill, economic and cultural, is footed by the American middle class. Capitalism, to Lasch, has the "ungodly ambition to acquire godlike powers over nature." Although he does not cite him in this context, Lasch agrees with Diderot: "I am convinced that the industry of man has gone too far. . . . I believe there is a limit in civilization, a limit more conformable to the felicity of man in general and far less distant from the savage state than is imagined." This is the Green-socialist agenda in a nutshell. Contrast this attitude with that of Tertullian, who in the second century wrote: "Every territory [is now] opened to commerce. The most delightful farmsteads have obliterated areas formerly waste, plough-land has subdued the woods, domestic cattle have put to flight the wild beast, barren sands have become fertile, rocks are reduced to soil, swamps are drained, the number of cities today exceeds the number of isolated huts in former times, islands no longer inspire fear nor crags terror; everywhere people, everywhere organized communities, everywhere human life."

Lasch, an admirer of syndicalism and guild socialism, also attacks capitalism for being essentially immoral. While rejecting Keynes's personal "immemorialism," Lasch in effect embraces his equally immoral economics: mass theft through inflation and other forms of redistribution. He charges the free market with breeding covetousness (although human greed seems to have been in abundant supply since the Fall), but he approves the covetous state. Lasch also claims that capitalism stimulates "insatiable demand," but where is his evidence for this? Surely this "demand" is more prevalent still in the Soviet *nomenklatura*, let alone among our own bureaucracy and special interest organizations.

A recovering Marxist, Lasch has his own favorite class, which is not the proletariat but the petty bourgeoisie, whom he praises for it's unique moral virtue. He argues that "small proprietors, artisans, tradesmen, farmers" are "unlikely to mistake the promised land of progress for the true and only heaven." But that is not the same as rejecting the very idea of material progress, as Lasch does on their behalf. How many members of the petty bourgeoisie would refuse, say, a backyard swimming pool or a second car on the ground that it would be morally corrupting? How many, in fact, would live happily as small holders in the shadow of the academic manor house? Lasch disparages "the tendency to want more than we need," but this view is ultimately totalitarian. John Kenneth Galbraith, for example, sees all goods that maintain life above a subsistence level as "artificial," to be taxed away or directly seized by the state; like Galbraith, Lasch would allow us only a lower-middle-class standard of living.

Lasch believes that an economy where "every wage earner is a potential artisan" or "shopkeeper" is the ideal, but complains that today, the "dream of setting up in business for yourself . . . remains almost universally appealing" and unachievable. So does the dream of writing a 591-page book, but are we to bemoan a division of labor that does not make every man an author? There is nothing wrong, morally or economically, in being an employee. To disparage this as wage slavery is to besmirch what must be, in an advanced economy, the prevalent form of work.

Another economic sin in Lasch's eyes is advertising, designed "to make the consumer an addict, unable to live without increasingly sizable doses of externally provided stimulation." He even blames drug addiction on "the very nature of a consumerist economy." Aside from that silly analogy (soap ads lead to cocaine?), the advertising of books and other products provides economically vital information to consumers. And what, by the way, is wrong with consumption? It is the purpose of production. But since there will be so much less production as the Laschian state expands, advertising will be taboo except, presumably, for government commercials. (There will be no shortage of those.)

It is all too easy to overemphasize the material, of course, but that does not make general privation a virtue, nor is the vice of materialism restricted to the well-off. Bums scrounging quarters are hyper-materialistic, as are people in socialist countries, who must constantly focus on material concerns in order to survive.

Ultimately, for Lasch, capitalism fails because it is not familial. The family creates "obligations that override considerations of personal advantage." The "market—no respecter of persons—reduces individuals to abstractions, anonymous buyers and sellers." But this makes no more sense than equating society with the individual, with you the finger and me the toe, both under the strict direction of the head. Like everyone else who makes the society-as-family analogy, Lasch sees the state as the brain. He has apparently never visited Congress.

The idea of progress, even reasonable progress, certainly has its dangers. As Paul Elmer More pointed out, it can generate a "contemptuous attitude towards the past," a "restiveness under any form of discipline or restraint, the feeling that one man is as good as another," and "the introduction of a sort of down-at-the-heels *laissez-faire* into morals." Condorcet, for example,

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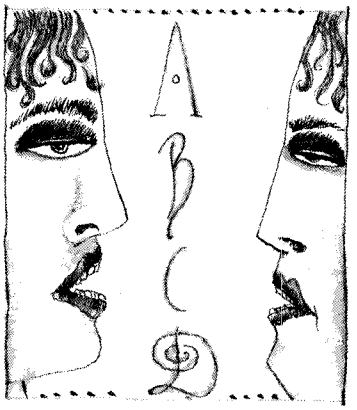

RHETORIC

A commentary on the quality of public debate and public education in the United States:

Last spring politicians and the media were intensively discussing whether the U.S. might get into a "quagmire" in the Mideast because of the Iraqi refugee problem. A survey of a large class of freshman history students at a state university revealed that three-fourths of them had not a clue as to what "quagmire" means.

—*Clyde Wilson*

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looked forward to the time when the "successive changes in human society" will have brought us to a time of "no master save reason," when "priests and their stupid or hypocritical tools will all have disappeared." The proper response to this sort of thing is that of Tocqueville, for whom real progress was based upon religion. It is the "religious nations," he said, which, "thinking only of the other world," have found the "great secret of success in this."

Lasch and other post-'89 socialists to the contrary, material improvement cannot be evil. "Just think of the progress and perfection which human skill has reached," wrote St. Augustine in *The City of God*. "There have been discovered and perfected, by the natural genius of man, innumerable arts and skills which minister not only to the necessities of life but also to human enjoyment." "Most men want to live and to prolong their lives; they want to be healthy and avoid sickness; they want to live comfortably and not to exist on the verge of starvation," Ludwig von Mises said in *Theory and History*. "The question is not whether such progress makes people happy. It makes them happier than they would otherwise have been. . . . Nietzsche expressed misgivings about the 'much too many.' But the objects of his contempt thought differently." So do the objects of Lasch's affection.

As Mises points out, however, economic progress is far from inevitable. It is "the effect of an accumulation of capital goods exceeding the increase in population. If this trend gives way to a standstill . . . or to capital decumulation, there will no longer be progress in this sense of the term." Today, big government has accomplished exactly that.

Lasch correctly criticizes the linking by the "libertarian movement" of "economic conservatism and cultural liberalism," but his own reverse combination makes no more sense. The left wing properly unites economic statism and cultural libertinism, for both war against the natural law. It is no surprise, for example, that the feminist movement has always been socialist, or that the *Communist Manifesto* advocated central banking and free love. Economic liberty and conservative culture, on the other hand, also belong together, as John Paul II makes clear in his latest encyclical, *Centesimus Annus*.

It all comes down, as it often does, to theology, and Lasch is heavily influenced by Calvinism. If one believes in the total depravity of human nature, that good works are a contradiction in terms, and that no individual spiritual advancement is possible, then no human progress can take place. But if one believes, as Roman Catholics and others do, that human nature is wounded by original sin but not completely corrupted, that good works are valuable spiritually and on their own terms, and that individual spiritual advancement is possible, then so is human progress.

Contrary to Christopher Lasch's belief, America can be moral, free, and ever more prosperous. That was the Founders' vision, and, for a time, we progressed toward it.

BRIEF MENTIONS

CASCA: THE MONGOL
by Barry Sadler
New York: Jove Books; 170 pp., $2.95

RAZOR
by Barry Sadler
New York: Jove Books; 247 pp., $3.95

Soldier, mercenary, medic, arms dealer, gunrunner, actor, and author of the most famous song about the Vietnam War, "The Ballad of the Green Beret"—Barry Sadler was indeed a man of many identities. Perhaps what is not as well-known is Sadler's astounding success as a pulp novelist, as the Louis L'Amour of action-adventure whose thirty-some paperbacks have sold over two million copies.

The books under review here were Sadler's final two works, the latter having been found in his computer at his Guatemala ranch where he was shot in the forehead in September 1988, an incident that left him paralyzed and brain damaged for 14 months before taking his life in November 1989. Begun in 1979, the *Casca: The Eternal Mercenary* series involves the centurion named Casca who pierced with his lance the side of the crucified Jesus. As blood and fluid poured forth from the wound and onto Casca's hand, Jesus said: "Soldier, you are content with what you are. Then that you shall remain until we meet again." And thus begins the saga of the soldier cursed by Christ to outlive the centuries and to wander the globe as an indestructible soldier for hire, forever fighting, forever surviving, forever waiting for Him to return.

Each volume in the series is virtually the same, with Casca as the champion of blood-sports or as the superior warrior enslaved to a person hungry for money, power, or fame; only the historic time and setting varies the scene. In *The Mongol*, the twenty-second volume in the series, Casca is a slave to a savage Tartar before being stolen by a young Mongol rebel named Temujin, later to be known as Genghis Khan. It is Casca, of course, who teaches the great Khan about military strategy and empire building. And like all of Sadler's stories, *The Mongol* is replete with violence and death and told in the hardboiled, no-nonsense prose that is common to the genre.

Razor is the second volume of Sadler's Martin Hendricks mercenary series. In this story Hendricks maneuvers to rescue his co-mercs who are imprisoned by a bloodthirsty central African dictator whose preferred method of torture involves delicacies with a razor. The most interesting portions of the novel involve Sadler's realistic depictions of gunrunning and arms dealing in Central America, of the dense community of ex-mercenaries working and residing in and around Hollywood, and the international world of high finance that supports the mercenary network—all of which Sadler knew firsthand. Though Sadler never nonfictionally detailed his mercenary experiences, arms dealer Ben Rossen claims that he and Sadler served in 13 armies—"Won 10, lost two, tied one," he jokes.

If there is one theme that runs through Sadler's works, it is the simple Hobbesian notion that, good intentions notwithstanding, man is incapable of transcending his animal state. Or as Casca in his final episode in *The Mongol* states, "Scratch the thin veneer of what man called culture and civilization and in most cases you would find a barbarian waiting to be set free."

—*Theodore Pappas*

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I'm Nobody

by Chilton Williamson, Jr.

"Literature, strictly consider'd, has never recognized the people, and whatever may be said, does not today. Speaking generally, the tendencies of literature, as hitherto pursued, have been to make most critical and querulous men."
—Walt Whitman

Fiedler on the Roof: Essays on Literature and Jewish Identity
by Leslie Fiedler
Boston: David R. Godine, Publishers, Inc.; 161 pp., $19.95

◆

In a prepublication interview, Leslie Fiedler remarked that he had wanted for years to use the title he has given to his latest book. In *Fiedler on the Roof*, however, the authorial persona resembles neither that of the effervescent Lev Teitlebaum of the Broadway stage, nor of the genially witty Fiedler of many previous books (*Love and Death in the American Novel*, *What Was Literature?*, etc.). This unfamiliar Fiedler is not so much a new Fiedler (the essays comprising the present volume were written between 1970 and 1989) as it is an unexpected one, although readers who have followed the critic's work closely over the past half-century (I have not read *To the Gentiles*, published in 1973) will likely be in some way prepared for what is anyway another Fielder—angry, at times spiteful, intending insult, and tormented always by a strain of cultural confusion that John Murray Cuddihy so well explained in *The Ordeal of Civility*, a sociological work of significance published sixteen years ago.

As a young professor of English at the state university at Missoula, Montana, Leslie Fiedler wrote to T.S. Eliot in London to demand from the poet an explanation of the "obsessive hostility" toward Jews evinced in his work; when Eliot replied by saying, in part, that some of his best friends were "jews," Fiedler flung the letter across the room. Today, he denounces "the pathological hatred of Jews endemic in Western culture, pre-Christian, Christian, or post-Christian," and insists that

Anna Mycek-Wodecki

"it is hard for me to be at ease in the United States, as long as *The Merchant of Venice* is played and replayed on stage and screen and television and remains required reading in classes in English." (In *What Was Literature?*, published only seven years before he wrote the above lines, Fiedler attacked the "censors" who prevented the showing of a film of *The Merchant*, as well as of Griffith's *Birth of a Nation*.) It enrages him to recall how, as a "Jew-boy" attending public school in Newark, New Jersey, he was forced to endure prayers offered to "*their* Lord"—an indignity which he seeks now to repay by employing the word "Gentile" only when absolutely necessary to remind us that he is indeed familiar with the English equivalent of *goy* and *goyish* with which he lards his pages. He admits to "doubts about whether assimilation into the traditional High Culture of the West did not mean for me—offspring of plebeian Eastern European Jews—a kind of apostasy, a falsification of my very identity," and declares that Europe is suspect for him for its anti-Semitic culture and history, while in America he remains a stranger in a strange land, forever an exile. Yet he adds, "I feel myself more hopelessly a foreigner in Jerusalem and Tel Aviv and the Holy City of Safad than I do in Rome or Bologna or Florence." Beyond this, there is still another twist, since, "Even as in America I know I am a Jew and doubt that I am an American, in Zion . . . I know that I am an American and doubt that I am a Jew. Only in the land of Dante am I sure that I am both; a happy stranger in an amiable strange land, aware at every moment that I can and will return to my native land, where I will feel not at ease, as ill-befits a Jew, but at home; just one more exile in the midst of other exiles." When finally Fiedler—after admitting that, while considering himself a Jew (though not a believing one), he is more uncertain of what being a Jew actually means—confesses to suffering from "a life-long identity crisis," it is easy to agree with him that he has a problem.

That problem being essentially personal in nature, it is of itself no proper concern to Fiedler's readers, who will be more likely to notice the bearing it has on the world's stock-in-trade: namely, his insistence upon the "mythic" validity of what he calls "pop literature," as opposed to "High Literature" and particularly Modernism, whose aim he identifies as the reinterpretation and general intellectualization of old and dying myths. High

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Literature, Fiedler argues, begins in America with Melville and Hawthorne and extends through Eliot, Pound, Faulkner, and Tate. Literally and figuratively, it has always traveled abroad to study, while "pop literature," despising Europe and European values, has gone to school at home; and it is in this hatred, Fiedler believes, that American Jews and *goyish* American writers of the "popular" school meet, as on native ground. "It is our common revulsion from the values of [the old] world that makes the most authentic American writers, WASPS that they are—Mark Twain, for instance, and Walt Whitman—seem spokesmen for my kind as well as theirs. 'Sivilization' Twain calls that rejected European cultural inheritance. . . . And Whitman makes explicit that it is not only the hierarchical class structures and limited freedoms of the Old World that he, like Twain, abjures, but Christian humanism itself. 'Cross out, please,' he chants, inviting the Muse to migrate to America, 'those immensely overpaid accounts, / That matter of Troy and Achilles' wrath, and Aeneas', Odysseus' wanderings, / Placard "Removed" and "To Let" on the rocks of your snowy Parnassus, / Repeat at Jerusalem.'"

If *Fiedler on the Roof* is notable chiefly for revealing a partially hidden agenda based on *ressentiment*, this is not enough to discredit much of what Leslie Fiedler has written over the years concerning life and literature in America. Fiedler's primary purpose, it seems to me, has been not to praise "pop literature" unduly but to discredit the Modernist agenda, whose aesthetics he has come to detest nearly as much as he does the politics of many of its practitioners. The trouble is that Fiedler, in his efforts to desacralize the gods before whom he himself once bowed, is tempted to misrepresent the unbelievers who refused to climb Parnassus but contented themselves instead with mixing among the *hoi polloi* below. This misrepresentation Fiedler accomplishes by a critical sleight-of-hand, the success of which is almost wholly dependent upon his disingenuous use of the word "pop."

The trick becomes apparent when Fiedler, with distractive casualness, includes the *Leatherstocking Tales*, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, *Huckleberry Finn*, *Tarzan of the Apes*, *The Wizard of Oz*, the novels of Charles Dickens, *Wonder Woman* comic books, and *The Valley of the Dolls* under the rubric of "pop literature." Slyly, he allows "pop" to emerge contextually as shorthand for "popular"; when in fact ever since the 60's "pop" and "popular" have meant two distinctly different things—the first represented by an Andy Warhol soup can, the second by a work of Norman Rockwell or of Frederick Remington. Also by trickish oversight, Fiedler conveniently ignores the difference between bourgeois culture in the 19th century and mass culture in the 20th, a ploy that allows him to make insupportable comparisons regarding the "popularity" of Poe, H. Rider Haggard, and Jacqueline Susann as forgers in the smithies of their souls of the uncreated conscience of their times. The truth is, Fiedler knows better than that. "I am not suggesting," he has written elsewhere, "that the search for standards be abandoned completely and that evaluation be confined to noises of admiration or distaste, the simple 'Wow!' or 'Ech!' which seems to satisfy some of our students."

Essentially, Fiedler's arguments against the formalism, bloodlessness, self-consciousness, and "elitism" of much of "High Art" in general and of Modernism in particular are attempts at answering the question, "How intellectual should literature really be?" To which the answer, I suppose, is, "It doesn't matter, so long as the intellect—whether by its presence or its absence—doesn't obtrude." "Best of all," Fiedler suggests in *What Is Literature?*, "are those works which, like Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex* or Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, satisfy both the guardians of Aristotelian-Horatian 'standards' and the mass audience, which responds to the mysterious *tertium quid* which the former do not even deign to notice."

As for "popular" culture in the sense of mass entertainment, Fiedler only reinforces my suspicion that there is a sinister quality inherent in it—a quality having less to do with the profit motive that reduces it to the lowest common denominator than with the quest for an artificial homogeneity that performs the same function in the interest of obviating cultural, class, ethnic, and religious *ressentiments* within our classless, godless, and multicultural "sivilization." There is a sense in which contemporary popular culture is created by nobody for nobody, generating vast sums in ill-gotten gains in the process of being sold to nobody. As Emily Dickinson wrote, "I'm nobody! Who are you? / Are you nobody, too? / Then there's a pair of us. . . ." ◈

LIBERAL ARTS

SHIPMATES

As the Associated Press reported last April, 36 crew members of the supply ship *Acadia* were pregnant and had to be transferred during the ship's deployment to the Persian Gulf. Though more than half became pregnant *after* the ship was under way, Navy spokesman Lt. Cmdr. Jeff Smallwood claimed there were "no indications" of improper fraternization between male and female sailors. "These women have a right to get pregnant," he argued. "The conclusion somebody is jumping to is that the *Acadia* is a love boat, and that's not the case." He said the 22 pregnancies that occurred after the ship had left for the Gulf were the result of fraternization with foreigners while the women were on liberty calls in Hawaii, the Philippines, and other ports. There was absolutely "no evidence," said Smallwood, that any of the Navy's rules against relations between men and women while on duty had been broken.

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The Good Soldier

by J.O. Tate

Ford Madox Ford
by Alan Judd
Cambridge: Harvard University Press; 476 pp., $27.50

◆

One of the many vices I cultivate is a weakness for biographies. An intelligent female once told me firmly that she didn't read biographies. She thought them depressing: the subjects got old and died. I tried to indicate that she was missing a lot, but she was adamant. I think now that if I were to renew my commendation of the pleasures of biography, I would point to Alan Judd's new life of Ford Madox Ford as perhaps an ideal place to start. Judd's book on Ford is a remarkable work about a remarkable man.

For me, Judd's book anticipated the remark another educated female let out in my hearing the other day: No, she had never read Ford because of his misrepresentations of his relationship with Joseph Conrad. Hers is a typical mistake. Ford was continually misconstrued during his lifetime, and the misunderstandings have outlived the man. Judd's life of Ford rectifies a host of errors and dissolves various prejudices. There can be no question that the reexamination of Ford's career and relationships with many literary people is justified, though it has been done before. Indeed, that is what provoked Judd's book: several times he feels obliged to correct the logic or the judgment of Arthur Mizener, for example.

On the other hand, Judd's *Ford Madox Ford* cannot be said to constitute or initiate a Ford revival if only because the best of Ford's work—*The Fifth Queen*, *The Good Soldier*, the first three-fourths of the Teitjens tetralogy known collectively as *Parade's End*—never really disappeared from literary awareness. I can myself remember hearing about Ford from my parents and others in the 1950's, when the cream of his work was reprinted. Ford has been rediscovered again and again. Perhaps these rediscoveries have been necessary because he did not fit easily into categories, and because his life was, in some sense, a shambles. But Alan Judd has found a way to make that life cohere by focusing on Ford's elusive personality and demonstrating his benignant nature.

Ford Hermann Hueffer was born in 1873 in Surrey, and died under the name we know him by in Deauville, in 1939. A grandson of Ford Madox Brown, he was brought up in a family connected with the Garnetts and the Rossettis; he was early touched by Catholicism, Francophilia, and a reverence for art. His lifelong obsession with writing—he wrote over eighty books and four hundred articles—registered early. By the turn of the century Ford's relationships with Joseph Conrad, Henry James, and Stephen Crane put him in the middle of the creation of much of modern literature: impressionism and symbolism in fiction, and, later, free verse. As a genuine Bohemian, Ford was never to surrender his indispensable position, which was a mental *point d'appui*, never a platform for leveraging power. I think Judd makes clear just how a man who *doesn't* calculate everything according to advantages of power and money is forever misinterpreted by those who do. And I think too that Judd has shown how a man who was no womanizer was so often beloved of women, not all of whom understood the complexity of his personality.

Out of the Romney marshes, Ford had a second life in London as he midwifed the birth of literary modernism. His *English Review* was for a time the greatest literary magazine in the world, introducing to the public D.H. Lawrence and Wyndham Lewis. When Ford was exasperated by a poetical gaffe of Ezra Pound's, he rolled on the floor, saving Pound "years." It was he who told Pound that poetry should be at least as well written as prose.

After those days and his involvements with Vorticism and Imagism, Ford concentrated everything he knew about the writing of novels in *The Good Soldier* (1915), his *tour de force*, and joined the army. His patriotic services told on his health, while his artistic and personal inferiors continued to live in ease in Bloomsbury. Yet his war experience did provide some of the material and provocation for *Parade's End*, in which "the last gentleman" endures the collapse of the old culture into the new world of industrial power.

Ford kept on as he had done before: he wrote, he edited, he encouraged and taught the young, he was loved, he loved life's finer pleasures. In his later years, his influence was amplified by his years in America. Judd doesn't emphasize the point, but through Caroline Gordon and Allen Tate—through their novels as well as their teaching—Ford's influence was broadcast in this country and shows up in the work of their students. Never provincial, Ford had an international, cross-cultural, and transatlantic impact.

Above all, his impact was personal, and Alan Judd has written a personal, even Fordian, book about him. Judd's biography often relies on a sort of privileged intuition and is bracingly unacademic though bristlingly intelligent. I suppose Judd identifies with his subject—one man of letters understanding another—and that is as it should be. The result is a sympathetic or empathetic study that's untethered by ordinary concern for documentation. Judd has made his own rules and justified them, oddly subordinating sometimes the presentation of Ford's life to his comment on it. Reading Judd's *Ford Madox Ford* is an offbeat but rewarding, even moving experience that uncannily captures the "something else, something left over"—the spirit, the sense of life itself—that is generally evaporated from ordinary biographies.

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Divided Loyalties

by Katherine Dalton

Reflections
by Graham Greene
Edited by Judith Adamson
London: Reinhart Books;
325 pp., $19.95

◆

Graham Greene died this year at 86, a ripe old age that was no small accomplishment for a man who at 19 played Russian roulette on the Berkhamsted common until he grew bored with even the possibility of his own death. As a "semilapsed" Catholic who professed belief (though not certainty) in purgatory but not hell, perhaps his passing was an easy one. One wishes at least so much for one of the great writers in English of this century.

Celebrated authors no longer cease publishing on their deaths and it seems likely that Judith Adamson's volume of Greene's previously uncollected newspaper work, reviews, and addresses will not be his final book. But—some stillborn novels aside—with his major essays and travel pieces having been collected elsewhere, and now this book of miscellany, there cannot be much left. It is testimony to Greene's talent that this volume is valuable in itself, and not just to round out a famous literary life.

Reflections begins with a short "Impressions of Ireland," done when Greene was 19 and on vacation in Dublin and Waterford; what is striking is how nicely the piece is written and how little in Ireland's politics has been resolved. The book ends, almost, and fittingly enough, with an address Greene made in Moscow in 1987, expressing his wish for an alliance between Roman Catholicism and communism. His was a political life, what with his friendship for Claud Cockburn and Kim Philby, his championship of revolutionary Latin America, and his hatred for American commercialism and imperialism that led him, among other actions, to resign from the American Academy of Arts and Letters in the early 60's shortly after his election in order to protest Mr. Johnson's war.

Here are a number of articles done in the 50's on Vietnam, echoes from which show up in *The Quiet American*, that wonderful book whose two central characters are metaphors for the old British and new American empires. "The Worm Inside the Lotus Blossom," about Paraguay, has details that were incorporated into *Travels With My Aunt*. For those more interested in Greene the novelist than Greene the activist the sources for much of his fiction can be found in several of these journalistic accounts.

Greene said that what he found most interesting in people was their divided loyalties—to one woman and another, to one's country and one's cause, to heaven and hell—and he focused his books on the conflict that arises from those divisions. But if all his books had done was to trace man's fall, he would have been one among many 20th-century nihilists; it is in his work those quick moments of redemption, expressed sometimes in nothing more than a murderer's wish to confess, or an atheist's doubt, that make him a Christian writer.

In some of the pieces here he is explicitly so, as in "The Last Pope," a 1948 address in which Greene gives a more charitable definition of the term "Christian civilization" that would include our own, fairly dark age. There are other good pieces that are neither religious nor political—a defense of the popular appeal of the movies and some gratitude for the censors in "Subjects and Stories," and a vivid account from 1939 of a bombing raid he flew on. There are some surprises, too. In "Indo-China: France's Crown of Thorns" we see for a fleeting moment Greene the imperialist, and are just as startled by an excellent piece on the movies ("Ideas in the Cinema," 1937) in which this citizen of the world shows a localist streak, in the midst of an argument against the "international" cinema: "For art has never really left the cave where it began, and you cannot live, as an English ace producer does, between Denham and Hollywood, with a break in New York for business conferences, and betweenwhiles make a picture which is the product of saturation, saturation in a particular environment. . . . Shakespeare is English first, and only after that the world's."

Only a few pieces ring false—one Catholic address, in which Greene is a more self-assured and even mawkish Catholic than he is typically elsewhere, and "Return to Cuba" (1963) and "Shadow and Sunlight in Cuba" (1966). Sentences such as "The war against illiteracy is a genuine crusade with a heroic quality of its own" are the sentences of a propagandist. But there are very few of these.

The only other jarring note in this book, to an American ear at least, is his recurring anti-Americanism, though most of this is in asides ("I was standing just behind the retiring American Ambassador, remarkable for the size and fatness of his earlobes . . ."). In his 1980 conversations with interviewer Marie-Françoise Allain, Greene mentioned that "Some time ago there was an article in *The Spectator* about *The Quiet American*, which said that it made little difference whether I inclined to the Right or the Left, since what I truly detested was American liberalism. That wasn't far wrong." His feelings toward America colored many of his opinions and spurred a lot of his activism, though some of that concern for the world's underdogs originated with his Catholicism; indeed many of the peoples he fought for or wrote about were Catholics—the Goans, the Latin American left, the Haitians, even some of the Vietnamese. If he was, as he described himself, a Protestant within the Catholic Church, he was a Catholic everywhere else. Perhaps another factor in his dislike for this country—which after all is far more religious than his own—was its Protestantism.

But in the end his belittling criticism of America is unimportant, and it would be unimportant even if American foreign policy were unimpeachable. "If only writers could maintain that one virtue of disloyalty—so much more important than chastity—un-

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spotted from the world" he writes in still another piece in this collection. He felt that in order to see one must step back, and for a man who prized in his own work its quality of detachment, the isolation of being a foreigner abroad, an Englishman in an American hemisphere, and a Catholic (however semilapsed) in a pagan world, was all part of the appeal.

Katherine Dalton is the managing editor of Chronicles.

Crusoe's Island

by Geoffrey Wagner

British Literature Since 1945
by George Watson
New York: St. Martin's Press;
208 pp., $39.95

◆

Because William York Tindall's *Forces in Modern British Literature* extends itself only to 1946, and because there has been nothing as wide-ranging published since, I looked forward to George Watson's book repairing the omission. Watson, a Cambridge don, is also the author of a splendid study of English criticism from Dryden to Eliot, which I have praised elsewhere.

What is more, I once studied at Oxford with many of the men he discusses in his new book. Alas, I find in it a new Watson who thinks Eliot "perverse," Spender "flatulent," and John Betjeman to have "triumphant lucidity." True, he devotes space to the Christian revival of Tolkien and C.S. Lewis, but Tolkien, my Anglo-Saxon tutor and just about the most boring man in the world in his day, hated Eliot and indeed almost everything written since the Middle Ages; while portly C.S. Lewis, whose lectures I attended with Kenneth Tynan, was enraged by Eliot to the point of writing a poor parody of *The Waste Land*.

Unfortunately, these useless donnish prejudices are infectious. Watson's opinions stand in for critical rigor. Even the period under survey in his book is vague. Watson compares George Orwell with Evelyn Waugh (whom I used to meet in the inebriated company of Randolph Churchill), but Orwell died in 1950, and Dylan Thomas three years later. "I believe," Watson claims, "the age of the second Elizabeth to have been one of the great ages of the British arts," but its intellectual life as laid out here seems pitifully feeble. Besides its American equivalents, or even a British successor written by Keith Waterhouse, Kingsley Amis's *Lucky Jim* seems second-rate; while his *Stanley and the Women* (1984), frequently alluded to by Watson, ranks as one of the worst novels I have ever read, excepting some of Graham Greene's later works. Amis has now been knighted, while Greene received the Order of Merit. Iris Murdoch, a wartime communist and a charming lady, annually churns out novels that George Stade, chairman of Columbia University's English department, has described as pretentious Harlequin romances; her latest books consist of trivial conversational matter that never ends, but only stops. Nevertheless, Iris Murdoch is now Dame Iris. Watson advances William Golding to support the contention that, "In literature, if in little else, Britain was again a world power." Golding has got a Nobel Prize. Pearl Buck had one too. Poet Laureate John Betjeman wrote what John Wain, in a Sunday newspaper review, identified as locally successful doggerel; Wain, who has since tried tactfully to bury this opinion, has been elected Professor of Poetry at Oxford. The official English literary establishment seems thin beer indeed, by comparison with the stronger brew of its academic critics, such as Kermode, Cranston, Davie, Ricks, and Alvarez. As the knighted and damned pass before our glazing eyes, writers of the rank of Amis, Braine, Muriel Spark, Colin Wilson, C.P. Snow, Margaret Drabble, Beryl Bainbridge, and Barbara Pym appear to fall sadly short of Dickens and Defoe.

But Watson has this curious notion that English has become "the *lingua franca* of the world—the first mankind has ever known—and more than half of the world's mail, it is said, is now in English." Most of that half surely originates outside the British Isles, while the claim that "Britain annually publishes three times as many titles, relative to population, as the United States" is spurious in view of American control of the British publishing industry. I recall the late Bennett Cerf of Random House telling me that by the end of the century there would be only seven book publishers left in Manhattan, and that he intended to make sure he was one of them. There are only a handful of independent book publishers left in England today; even its once flourishing paperback firms are all appendages of some American conglomerate.

The penalty for this industrialization of what was formerly a gentleman's avocation (Meredith's Richard Feverel is casually asked by his father if he intends to "publish" when he goes to London) is that writers leave few footprints, or lasting ones, behind. In their day, there was enormous acclaim for the following authors, not one of whom rates a mention in Watson's pages: Lawrence Durrell, Henry Green (Yorke), Thomas Hinde, Rex Warner, H.E. Bates, Rosamond Lehmann, William Sansom, V.S. Pritchett, Nigel Dennis, Gabriel Fielding. (I merely glance along my shelves as I write.) Doris Lessing and L.P. Hartley receive one non-evaluative mention each, Anthony Burgess little more. Such, too, is the fate of John Le Carré, who brilliantly refined a genre; while a thriller writer of extreme sophistication, Norman Lewis, is not mentioned at all. (I fail to find my erstwhile literary agent, Paul Scott, a very stimulating substitute.) No one in England in this period has altered the course of fiction. As Watson lets drop, "Proust and Joyce were not Englishmen." Indeed.

When he tackles poetry, Watson is equally hard to follow with sympathy. "The aging W.B. Yeats" apparently "tried to be influenced by Pound." Did he? Where? Yeats' last poems, notably the Byzantium pair, are among the finest in the English language. When Yeats died in 1939, "he was treated," Watson writes, "with only distant and qualified admiration by W.H. Auden." But that poet's "In Memory of W.B. Yeats" was among the most moving eulogies written in his time. Baffled by Betjeman, conned by Connolly (notably over *The Outsider*), what can one say? Instead, one turns to British drama.

I was lucky enough to attend an early performance of John Osborne's seminal *Look Back in Anger*—which Watson nicely terms "a kitchen-sink

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version of *Private Lives*" — at the Royal Court in 1956; and I admit to entertainment (little more) by subsequent fringe theater in England, as also by some postwar cinema there. Thanks to a fine dramatic tradition and intelligent audiences, Albion has enjoyed a rich mine of theatrical originality owing to the presence of such playwrights as Osborne, Wesker, Pinter, Stoppard, Alan Bennett, and Michael Frayn, to say nothing of the sometimes hilarious Joe Orton, murdered in 1967 when in his 30's (though no Marlowe for all that). Yet can we seriously agree with Watson that, "since the 1960's the British have had it mostly their own way in the theaters of the West"? Beckett was not British. Nor were Ionesco, Durrenmatt, Genet, Miller, Giraudoux, Sartre, and a dozen others of consequence.

The penultimate chapter of *British Literature Since 1945* is the best. It is an excellent generalized essay on feminism, and to some extent the fiction "inspired" by feminism, and it is devoid of the irritating Britain-Is-Best chauvinism that robs so much else in this book of value.

Geoffrey Wagner is author of Wyndham Lewis: A Portrait of the Artist As the Enemy, Five for Freedom: A Study of Feminism in Fiction, *and* The Red Crab, *a novel.*

Motels and Filling Stations

by Allan Carlson

What Are People For?
by Wendell Berry
San Francisco: North Point Press;
210 pp., $9.95

◆

Rural and small town America is nearly dead. A distinctive culture rooted in family farms, weakening since 1900 and seriously diseased since 1960, emerged from the 1980's in a terminal state. In Iowa alone, the last ten years saw a net out-migration of 280,000 people, a full tenth of the state's population, with most of the loss concentrated in the countryside and in hamlets of under one thousand souls. As a rural minister recently told the *Wall Street Journal*, "These towns are bleeding people." Deaths now outnumber births in many Iowa counties. As another commentator remarked, "People who grew up with families and neighbors suddenly don't have either."

Amidst this accelerating collapse of the agrarian order, the most consistent voice of protest and warning has been that of Kentucky farmer and poet Wendell Berry. With good reason, his most recent collection of essays, *What Are People For?*, conveys mainly pessimism, even despair.

Berry remains a maddening figure for ideologues, both right and left. Conservatives have fumed over his lack of respect for industrial capitalism, and his new volume offers no recantations. Americans live "by the tithes of history's most destructive economy," he says. The author labels the economic ideal of competition as false, silly, and "destructive both of nature and of human nature." He despises "agribusiness" in all its forms. Blasting both "industrial food" and "industrial sex," Berry concludes that "[o]ur kitchens and other eating places more and more resemble filling stations, as our homes more and more resemble motels."

At the same time, Berry repeatedly violates left-liberal sensibilities. He questions racial integration schemes, suggesting that "the two races are useful and necessary to each other because of their differences." Berry doubts the wisdom of more immigration from Mexico, because a "generous immigration policy would be contradicted by our fundamentally ungenerous way of life." He endorses child labor "in viable household and local economies." Scandalizing the libertines and the universalists, Berry praises marital fidelity, the central importance of family life, and local loyalties. He denies the merits of feminist egalitarianism, arguing that "[t]o have an equal part in our juggernaut of national vandalism is [still] to be a vandal." He condemns state education systems that "innovate as compulsively and as eagerly as factories," and wants no part of schools that "serve the government's economy and the economy's government."

Heir to the agrarian populists, Berry decries the institutions that have homogenized American life, battered self-sufficiency, and smothered family autonomy. "My small community in Kentucky," he reports, "has lived and dwindled for at least a century under the influence of four kinds of organizations — governments, corporations, schools, and churches — all of which are distant (either actually or in interest), centralized, and consequently abstract in their concerns." His key (and absolutely correct) point is that "the old cultural centers of home and community were made vulnerable to this invasion by their failure as economies." When the members of a household or village no longer aid each other through productive endeavors, then the individuals involved "fall into dependence on exterior economies and organizations," and lose their freedom.

In an insightful discussion of the novel *Huckleberry Finn*, Berry hints that American families and communities have been particularly vulnerable in this regard. Mark Twain's real "failure" was not the oft-noted turn toward juvenile foolishness in the last third of the book, but the inability of the book's only "adult" characters — Aunt Polly and Aunt Sally — to impress their notion of settled community on Huck. For him, the only choice in the end seemed to be between the dreaded "pious civilization" of Miss Watson and escape into some "territory." Berry concludes: "*Huckleberry Finn* fails in failing to imagine a responsible, adult community life. And I am supposing further that this is the failure of Mark Twain's life, and of our life, so far, as a society."

Through most of his discourses, Berry sees little prospect for hope. Farm communities "are declining and eroding," while "most of the enterprises of the old household economy" are gone. He sees "a diminished country," marked by crumbling stone walls, sagging and fallen barns, and empty houses, all evidence of "human life poorly founded, played out, and gone." Increasingly, country people live and think like city people, and so participate in their own demise: "Our garbage mingles with New Jersey garbage in our local landfill, and it would be hard to tell which is which." He denies that individual protest is of any public use, eschews politics as corrupt and corrupting, and dismisses as presumptuous the idea that he might be part of

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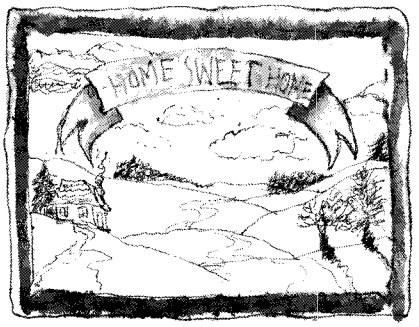
a saving remnant: "One . . . had better understand that there may, after all, be nothing left to save."

Yet in his own life, and sometimes in his words, Berry holds out the possibility of a better future. Like the Chestertonian Distributionists and Southern Agrarians before him, Berry is more adept at criticism than at prescription, but he does sketch out the shape of a "beloved community": food production and distribution organized locally; ponds, streams, and woodlands harvesting a sustainable yield; and a system of decentralized, small-scale industries. Marriage would again have "at its heart a household that is to some extent productive" through housewifery, carpentry, gardening, woodlot management, and cottage industry. Every American, he says, could regain some control over his life by participating in food production, by preparing



meals again at home, by buying local products, and by trading directly with farmers.

Berry, however, also demands a more painful sacrifice. Concerning the use of machines, he notes that "if we are ever again to have a world fit and pleasant for little children, we are surely going to have to draw the line where it is not easily drawn." A few pages later, he adds: "We must achieve the character and acquire the skills to live much poorer than we do. We must waste less. We must do more for ourselves and each other." Berry's true summons is for a voluntary, secular war against materialism in both its socialist and capitalist forms. His tragedy is that this may be a lonely gathering in these, the waning years of the Second Millennium.

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Hoisting the Black Flag

by Gregory McNamee

Confessions of an Eco-Warrior
by Dave Foreman
New York: Harmony Books;
229 pp., $20.00

◆

Dave Foreman grew up on a ranch in the mountains of New Mexico, where he came of age in the early 1960's. Like many others of his generation, he joined the Young Republicans and campaigned for Barry Goldwater, witnessed the near-collapse of American society in the late 1960's, and began to realize that the system he had believed in was out of whack.

Convinced that wild America ought to be preserved for the coming generations, Foreman became a conservationist, then a congressional lobbyist for the Wilderness Society. When it appeared that the nation's leading environmental groups were paying more attention to fundraising dinners than to agitating for the preservation of wild places, Foreman fled Washington and, with other disaffected colleagues, founded Earth First!, a loosely knit alliance of environmental activists whose motto is "No Compromise in Defense of Mother Earth!"

The group took some of its cues and much of its anarchist agenda from the late Edward Abbey, whose novel *The Monkey Wrench Gang*, published in 1975, recounts the adventures of a group of ecosaboteurs who roam the West destroying dams and billboards. In spite of its cartoonish characters and transparent plot, Abbey's book helped push radical environmentalism to the forefront of the ecopolitical movement in the late 1970's and early 1980's, when Earth First! was founded.

In its decade under Foreman's tutelage (it has no official leaders) the organization never numbered more than a few thousand people. Yet its members exhibited a special talent for outrageous publicity-garnering acts that gave Earth First! a presence much greater than its numbers would normally warrant: installing a plastic "crack" down the spillway of Glen Canyon Dam, sending a pirate ship afloat on the waters of Lake Powell in pursuit of visiting Interior Secretary James Watt, sabotaging bulldozers and performing in the dark of night "unauthorized maintenance on big yellow machines" and on other instruments of so-called progress.

Much of Foreman's thinking derives from a rural, conservative, Luddite tradition. For his fiery speechmaking and endorsement of direct action, however, Dave Foreman was early on branded a dangerous terrorist by the federal government; the FBI set to work against him with the same zeal that it brought against the antiwar movement two decades ago, in the days before the United States learned to pick enemies who had no chance whatever of winning. Typically, the government overestimated the influence of Foreman's organization. Earth First! people were harassed and local chapters infiltrated by *agents provocateurs*; in 1989, Foreman and three others were arrested on a charge of conspiracy to destroy a nuclear power plant near Phoenix, Arizona. The matter has yet to come to trial, but early reports suggest that the government's evidence is slim at best. (The informant assigned to crack Foreman's inner circle has admitted as much.)

All this is enough to have made Dave Foreman something of a celebrity of the kind that generates instant, fast-buck autobiographies. Having appeared on *60 Minutes* and the usual round of talk shows, in *Confessions of an Eco-Warrior* Foreman has obliged us with just a glimpse or two into his private life. "I'm not sure what this book is," the author writes. "It's not an autobiography or even a memoir. . . . It's not a polemic or a how-to guide. I guess it's a little bit like an ugly mongrel dog in which you can see the ears of one breed, the jowls of another, and so on."

Like many other environmentalist authors, Foreman details the effects of the Industrial Age on our planet: the clearcutting of the world's rain forests, the loss of biological diversity, the depletion of the ozone layer, the overgrazing of public lands. To alleviate these, Foreman proposes a radical program of action not much different from that of Earth First! (from which, its ranks now swelled with tie-dyed neohippies and cause-hoppers, he has lately resigned). He continues to urge the

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destruction of dams and the restoration of free-flowing rivers; the establishment of huge tracts of wilderness and roadless areas; and the practice of an idealized politics that admits of no compromise. Much of *Confessions of an Eco-Warrior* is an extended political pamphlet elaborating on these points.

In ten years' time, Dave Foreman's brand of radical environmentalism has served both to polarize the ecological movement and to push the rank and file toward greater activism. His program has as many detractors as it does followers, but few people within or without the environmentalist camp can simply shrug it off, and any serious ecological debate must somehow take Foreman's positions, as elaborated in his book, into account.

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Partial Attraction

by Ellen Wilson Fielding

Feminism Without Illusions: A Critique of Individualism
by Elizabeth Fox-Genovese
Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press; 347 pp., $24.95

◆

Elizabeth Fox-Genovese's career seems dedicated to the principle that radicals can be reasonable. The encouraging title of her latest book suggests that they may even be realistic. Although the author challenges the grounds on which most feminists argue their rights, she is admittedly and regrettably a feminist herself, and her book is primarily a contribution to a family quarrel.

What teases is the suggestion, here and there, of a susceptibility to ideological conversion. In this Ms. Fox-Genovese's book reminds me of Germaine Greer's offering of a few years ago. It contained just enough openness to the allurements of traditionalism to arouse in some a missionary impulse. But whatever the peregrinations of a Germaine Greer or an Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, neither seems likely to loose a floodgate of feminist converts to conservatism by means of their arguments, objections, or misgivings.

Fox-Genovese argues that the vocabulary and philosophy of individual rights on which feminists (and almost everybody else in modern times) have based their claims are illegitimate and finally unsatisfactory inheritances of capitalist, paternalistic, bourgeois society. Feminists should recognize the extent to which the language of individual rights derives from an intellectual history that is market-driven and paternalistic and hence an uncomfortable bedfellow of feminists. A more communitarian philosophy of rights, taking a leaf from pre-Enlightenment models, would help offset the gravitational pull of the modern state and the increasingly atomized condition of its citizens.

She has a point, and she also has a point when she alludes to inconsistencies in many conservative attempts to balance the claims of the individual against those of the community or its subgroups. Having said that, however, I have said almost all the positive things I can say about this book.

Ms. Fox-Genovese is better at raising problems and contradictions and summarizing the depressingly wrongheaded schools of feminist thought and doling out dollops of praise and criticism for each than she is at letting us know how she would reconcile the demands of feminism with human needs, human rights—and human weakness. It is often hard to pin down the degrees to which she agrees or disagrees with a given school of feminist thought: her book is too full of the diffuse "understanding" that characterizes conversations in which someone is trying to gerrymander a consensus. Like other practitioners of ecumenism, she seems to dodge straight yeas and nays.

Most damningly, she left me uncertain as to whether her proposed new model of feminist thinking was meant to be closer to the Truth of things or merely more efficacious in realizing feminist goals. If she were inquiring into Truth, wouldn't she define her terms better, or at all? What does it mean to say (as she does) that pre-modern societies identified society as prior to the individual and understood the individual's rights as devolving upon him as a member of a group? "Prior to the individual" could and did mean different things at different times to different people. Pre-Christian societies viewed the individual differently than did Christian ones, and religious societies view him differently than, say, communist societies do. It matters, a bit, what kind of bundle of collectivities, acknowledging what kind of moral and religious checks, one is thinking of when one attempts to ameliorate existential *angst*. Yet Ms. Fox-Genovese's formulations repeatedly sidestep the underlying philosophical problems. Here is one of many examples.

> Since the beginnings of human history, men and women have demonstrated a propensity to congregate in communities. The propensity runs so deep as to *look very much like* a fundamental aspect of human nature. *Whatever the intentions of nature*, the development of human history has offered communities differing degrees of legal and political protection, until in our own time—with the noteworthy exception of corporations—they receive very little at all. (My italics.)

This philosophical murkiness increases in direct proportion to the specificity of the issue. I've read Fox-Genovese's chapter on pornography, so I know that she's opposed to it, and thinks that feminist arguments against it should naturally emphasize pornography's violation of groups (women, society) rather than of individuals. But when it comes to causes or cures, Ms. Fox-Genovese does what she always does—she asserts that the traditional way in which people have lived and related to one another is unsalvageable: "We are not likely to restore decency by returning women, and violence against women, to the bedroom and the kitchen"; "Throughout the twentieth century, the irreversible intrusion of the market into the so-called private sphere has steadily eroded marriage as a career"; "Since men cannot be held accountable for supporting women, as, for example, through alimony, women must be able to support themselves and often also their children"; "The hard truth is that our society is not prepared to provide adequately for children, and those who oppose abortion are, in general, those least in favor of expanding social and family services."

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The device of acknowledging the pull of another point of view but consigning it, a tad regretfully, to the dustbin of history, supports the author through an astonishing amount of conservative reading. And her interpretations of what she reads are often faulty and reductionist; consider, for instance, this doubly erroneous summary:

> Western Christianity has always had a tendency, well exemplified in Saint Augustine, to believe that sins should be eradicated and judged at the root—in the imagination. But it has also had another, best exemplified in the Jesuits, that the sinner should be judged not by the intention (which is intrinsic to the inherently sinful human condition) but by the act.

I am impressed—and a bit bewildered—by her effort. She does not read to excoriate. Her description of *The Politics of Human Nature*, written by the editor of this magazine, demonstrates enough good will, and some emotion I might almost call nostalgia, to suggest a genuine difference between the author and those feminists who shudder at novels written in the bad old days of blatant female oppression. She has even read Richard Weaver on rhetoric, and values him. "If only we were all dead or better," as the narrator in *Pictures From an Institution* says.

Ms. Fox-Genovese tackles at great length the hot topic of what may be called the Stanford question: should we radically alter or abolish the canon of Western literature? Though she favors its revision, she also damns it with more faint praise than many of her colleagues would accord it: "In one way or another, women or the representation of gender figured centrally in the thought of Machiavelli, Hobbes, Locke, and Hume. . . . Contemporary feminists reject their answers but recognize that they sketched the contours of the problem. Even those who, like Karl Marx, did not especially concern himself with women, invite scrutiny for their silences."

She avoids the onerous work of proving or disproving the superiority or the timelessness of the great works of Western literature by reducing them to a kind of personality profile of the Western world itself. She most clearly tips her hand when she comes closest to praising great thinkers of the past: "Nor need we reject in toto the conservatives' argument that the truly great writers conveyed transcendent, timeless, and universal values. Even those who reject such absolutes ought to be able to recognize the world-historical power and continued relevance of the ideas of a Plato or Aristotle or Shakespeare."

"Even those who reject such absolutes." . . . But an awful lot hinges on whether or not you reject such absolutes. Ms. Fox-Genovese's reading of the conservative tradition and her partial attraction toward pre-modern communities is no more than romantic nostalgia if she persists in accepting, as enduring and necessary accompaniments of Progress, every alteration in traditional cultural values and family relationships.

Ellen Wilson Fielding is an editor-at-large for The Human Life Review *and a columnist for* Crisis *magazine. She lives in Davidsonville, Maryland.*

The Dethronement of Reason

by Tom Bethell

The Long Pretense: Soviet Treaty Diplomacy from Lenin to Gorbachev
by Arnold Beichman
New Brunswick: Transaction Books; 303 pp., $32.95

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The other day, according to a *New York Times* editorial, Gorbachev and Yeltsin were trying to put together a "reform coalition that offers new hope for Soviet politics and policy." Such a coalition might counter "the threat of a hard-line dictatorship," the paper added. Arnold Beichman probably read it, too, and I can imagine how he reacted: "Offers new hope for Soviet politics? You mean there was hope in the past?! There's no such *thing* as Soviet politics!!!"

The nice thing about Arnold is that, at the age of 78, he has not lost the capacity for indignation. No doubt that's what keeps him so spry. Beichman is the author of *Nine Lies About America* and a regular columnist for the *Washington Times*. He grew up on New York's Lower East Side, went to Columbia University, and worked as city editor of the New York daily paper *PM* during World War II. He seems to have been one of the few people of his generation and background who was at no point a socialist sympathizer—not even during the Spanish Civil War.

Now he has written a book about the history of U.S.-Soviet treaty-making over the years—a most useful and readable compendium. As he shows, that history is one of absurdity from beginning to end. Beichman's thesis is that nothing fundamental has changed in the Soviet Union, and that nothing *can* change as long as it adheres to Marxist-Leninist dogma. A Leninist state, he writes, is not reformable unless it abandons its police power, political monopoly, economic control, and "sense of world mission," none of which Soviet rulers have done.

Beichman copiously faults Western intellectuals in general (and the *New York Times* in particular) for accepting President Gorbachev's "virtuous profession" at face value. Simultaneously, he points out, German unification was treated as something that we should be very cautious about. He asks: if skepticism about a Western democracy "which has no continuity with its short-lived (twelve-year) Nazi past is regarded as prudential, why isn't it prudential to be all the more skeptical about Russia, a tottering totalitarian dictatorship with unrepudiated ties to its bloody Stalinist past?"

As they say, future historians will certainly marvel. They will marvel that the United States just went on negotiating treaties with the Soviets, signing them, seeing the Soviets violate them, and then planning the next round of talks. Kenneth Adelman, Reagan's arms control director, said in 1988: "We never really found anything much to do about Soviet cheating. That's the sad truth. Those outside government may well wonder why, year after year, we reported a pattern of Soviet violations and did nothing about it. . . . We tried—oh! how we tried—to come up with effective countermeasures, but there didn't seem to be any." Congress

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required us to "stay in arms agreements that the Soviets were violating," he explained.

When he says that this is "reason disthroned," Beichman does not exaggerate. There was, of course, an obvious step that the Reagan administration could have taken. It could have broken off negotiations already underway for the next treaty (for there was always a next one). If Reagan had done this, going on TV with an explanation, arms control would have been undermined and Congress would have been impotent. But Reagan didn't want to do any such thing. He enjoyed the ceremonial encounters with Gorbachev, and by the time he left the White House, having signed a treaty with very unwise provisions (denying ourselves the right to put nonnuclear warheads in ground-launched Cruise missiles, for example), he was no doubt convinced that the charade of signing embossed parchment really did preserve the peace.

Reagan always wanted to perform on the stage of history more than he wanted to write the script. The liberals accused him of being an actor, but they withdrew the charge when they saw he was prepared to read *their* lines. The calculation in the executive branch seemed to be that the cost (in terms of publicity) of ending negotiations is always higher than the cost (in terms of security) of making one more concession. The media will make you look bad if you suspend the talks! So lawyers blurred the wording and everyone hoped the Soviet violations wouldn't occur too embarrassingly soon.

Beichman points out that American appeasement has been pretty much confined to our dealings with the Soviet Union. (Notice in contrast our lack of restraint in attacking Iraq, guilty of the U.N.-abhorred crime of border crossing.) I wish Beichman had relaxed a little and waxed philosophical on the question: why were we for so long so consistently deferential to Soviet rulers? In recent decades sheer fear has played a big part, of course. But Franklin Roosevelt displayed the same respectful attitude, so it predates the Soviet nuclear arsenal.

One thought is that American-style liberalism and Soviet communism are cognate ideologies. There are differences, of course. We have accepted the restrictions imposed on office-holders by democracy. (But those are mere rules of succession. Constitutional restraints on state power *per se* have been mostly removed in the U.S.) The Communists disdained such bourgeois inhibitions. Both systems are Godless, "progressive," and redistributionist; both unsympathetic (in practice) to property and family; and both have been driven by the destructive egalitarian ideal: in our case inchoately and unofficially, in the Soviets' forthrightly and officially.

Possibly, then, historians a hundred years from now will regard the Cold War as a contest between two versions of socialism; theirs a forthright and zealous faith, ours wishy-washy and fainthearted (pragmatically allowing the wealth-creation needed for its subsequent redistribution). They burned heretics at the stake, or at least shot them in Lubyanka Prison, or sent them to Siberia. But perversely they held the moral high ground as they did so. We believed what they believed, but far less fervently. James Burnham pointed out in *The Suicide of the West* that it was our acceptance of their ideals that demoralized and disarmed us.

This metaphorical disarmament was then reified in the foolish treaty-making that rightly disturbs Beichman. It was not that the Soviets outwitted us in negotiation, or that we were too afraid of what the public would think or the media would say if "talks" were broken off. It was that, deep down, American elites believed that the "Communist" version of the ideology we held in common was purer and therefore morally superior to our namby-pamby democracy. This has now changed, however.

Beichman would not agree with the three preceding paragraphs, I fear. He has always insisted on viewing communism as a separate and distinct thing, taxonomically apart from our virtuously democratic government. The Soviets were always more strenuously resisted by George Meany-led labor unions than by our boardroom types, he would point out. But, overlooking my suggestion that we are really dealing with different denominations of the same church, he will regard my further suggestion that there has been some *recent* change in the struggle as a terrible heresy. "Nothing fundamental has changed in Moscow" is and long has been his battle cry.

It may be, but there has been a change in the West. We no longer take Soviet claims at face value, or entertain any hope that communism will lead us into the Promised Land or create the New Man. The watershed event, I believe, was Mikhail Gorbachev's ceremonial arrival in Washington, D.C., in December 1987. The INF Treaty was to be signed, but protesters were massed on the Mall, mostly Jewish groups, some from as far away as Alaska. I wrote at the time that this was the beginning of the end for communism.

Beichman's mistake, I believe, is to think that a faith survives until it is formally repudiated. "For me," he writes, "the Soviet/Russian future hinges on whether or not the legitimizing ideology of Marxism-Leninism is formally and openly delegitimized by the Soviet Politburo." He is right to insist that there has been no such repudiation. But the faith is withering away anyway and it will continue to do so. All along it was not so much internal police as external believers who nourished it. It was a Western experiment that was tried out on the Russian people, and the experiment is now over. It remains only for its apparatus to dissolve.

Beichman would reply that Communists still in power relish that power and won't give it up without a fight. The other day I noticed a headline in the *San Francisco Chronicle* and again thought of Beichman: "Gorbachev Warns Cold War Could Be Revived." The world, Gorbachev was quoted as saying, "could once again plunge into the abyss of the Cold War." Analysts and "Western diplomats in Moscow" were "speculating" that George Bush's "cool reception to Moscow's pending request for $1.5 billion in farm credits could be worrying Gorbachev." Three days later the headline in the *New York Times* was as follows: "Bush Is Leaning to Food Credits for the Soviets."

This will have come as no surprise to Beichman. And he is partly right. The Soviets will continue to export money from us by veiled and not-so-veiled threats. But the effects of such food aid will be to ensure that the necessary economic reforms do not take place. And without fundamental

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reform, the collapse of the Soviet Union will be unstoppable.

Will Communist Party officials not merely threaten but actually precipitate a war rather than lose power? For an answer to this, I telephoned Beichman in his British Columbia eyrie. He had just returned from a fortnight in Washington, D.C., where he met with senior CIA officials, apparently. No, he said, he wasn't predicting a world war. "Post-book," he said, referring to a change of mind since he finished the manuscript, "I am predicting civil war in the Soviet Union."

For over fifty years now, Beichman has fought the good fight against communism, for which we all owe him a debt of gratitude. Now, at last, he should feel free to declare victory, come on home and devote his energies to combating the same ideology in its domestic manifestation. Those of us who know him also hope that he may find time to write his memoirs, which could shed new light on the public events that have so preoccupied him.

Tom Bethell is Washington editor of the American Spectator.

What Is Right?

by Tomislav Sunic

The Nature of the Right
Edited by Roger Eatwell and Noël O'Sullivan
Boston: Twayne Publishers; 193 pp., $15.95

◆

Many ambiguities continue to surround the term "right." A century after the word entered the jargon of party politics, and forty-five years after the military defeat of fascism, there is still no comprehensive theory of the right. What exactly does it represent in a time of "soft" politics and the end of "hard" ideologies? Does it make much sense to talk about the right-left dichotomy in a society that is weary of politics and impatient with beliefs in "historical necessity"? The more one tries to narrow the idea of the "right," the more we are at a loss to find a suitable and overarching definition.

In the series of essays comprising *The Nature of the Right*, Roger Eatwell, J.S. McClelland, Arthur Aughey, Roger Woods, Michael Billig, and Noël O'Sullivan have made a serious attempt to sort out the intellectual origins of the various rightist tendencies that have shaped European and American politics. As these writers remind us, "right" is a word that has been subject to different interpretations in different places and epochs. For instance, right-wing intellectuals of the French Third Republic, in the first half of the 20th century, are today a poor source of inspiration for the constitutionally minded and progress-loving rightists in America. By and large, on the European front, a variety of conservatives and right-wingers have pursued their agendas with greater intellectual rigor than have American conservatives. European conservatives, even in the Americanized Europe of the postwar era, find little echo among American conservatives, let alone neoconservatives.

I commend O'Sullivan and Eatwell for their careful treatment of issues and ideas that have preoccupied generations of conservative scholars and activists. They are justly dismissive of the stereotypical rightist intellectual watchdog of Daumier's paunchy bankers, and equally so of the notion of him as a bloodsucking monster bent on the destruction of all that is good in the world. Instead, they and the other contributors provide a historical and chronological survey of rightist thought and thinkers, and of the historical context in which these have thrived.

Eatwell *et al.*, are clearly aware of the potential of the right at a time when the walls are coming down all over Europe and communism appears to be disappearing. The rightists in France, in Germany, and in England have acquired an impressive intellectual artillery, and it could be their ideas that are revived in the 21st century.

Roger Woods recalls that to have been a rightist revolutionary in Weimar Germany meant primarily to have been opposed to the Versailles *diktat* and to the creeping economic *anomie* that had swept across defeated Germany in the aftermath of the First World War; while Carl Schmitt—and also Martin Heidegger and Ernst Jünger—were only several among a large number of conservative theorists whose reputations are well-maintained today by their young disciples in Europe. By contrast, writes J.S. McClelland, a man of the right in the French Third Republic was typically a reactionary imbued with the teaching of Charles Maurras, anti-Semitism, and an almost pathological hatred of Germans.

Noël O'Sullivan devotes considerable space to GRECE, an erudite and freewheeling group of intellectuals better known as the French New Right. This New Right advocates a fusion of all rightist traditions, and tops itself with an unabashed call for the rejection of Judeo-Christian monotheism and its replacement by a resurrected European paganism. Undoubtedly, given its influence in the French and Italian academic establishments, the New Right may soon become an *éminence grise* behind the European body politic. The major figure of the New Right, Alain de Benoist, has openly stated that liberalism and vulgar commercialism are today a far greater threat than communism to the European community. Drawing on the work of Friedrich Nietzsche and Oswald Spengler, and also on that of Marxists such as Antonio Gramsci and Régis Debray, the French New Right is a unique conservative movement, light-years removed from the biblically minded and buck-loving "New Right" in America. Unlike the traditional European rightists, Benoist is trying to achieve a vision of Europe stretching from the Urals to the Iberian peninsula. For him, the looming danger is global democracy under the auspices of Wall Street and Mickey Mouse.

Although the contributors on occasion have trouble separating themselves from their biases, *The Nature of the Right* is nonetheless a useful *vade mecum* for those wanting an introduction to political ideas and sensibilities that have long been obscured by liberal and socialist trends; it is a pity, however, that the authors have not examined more closely the differences between Anglo-American and European conservatives. In spite of the merit of this small volume, a comprehensive book on the nature and meaning of the right remains to be written.

Tomislav Sunic is the author of Against Democracy and Equality: The European New Right.

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Letter From Europe

by Thomas Molnar

History Lessons

◆

As I write I have in front of me a number of statements, articles, and conference projects—and more are coming to my attention almost daily—indicating what amounts to an invasion of Eastern and Central Europe by Western zealots, do-gooders, investors, gurus, and sharks. They emanate from American and West European offices, banks, institutes, universities, and other headquarters of alleged aid projects, some plainly admitting their interest in profit, others camouflaging their motive behind the usual moral propaganda.

A few samples. The *Dawson Newsletter* issues "an invitation," signed by Dr. Joseph Koterski, S.J., to its readers "to consider what forms the reconfiguration of Europe could take," and asks "what to do with so much fresh energy and the good will of a new morning?" Jacques Attali, ex-advisor to president Mitterrand, has left his job and is now heading a worldwide Development and Reconstruction Bank (with the initials "BERD") that will invest in the Eastern and Central European countries, but makes its loans conditional on the adequate "display by these countries of a democratic restructuring and observance of human rights." Even Robert Bellah writes in the March issue of the *New Oxford Review* that "if we are exhilarated by the triumph of capitalism [in Europe] rather than by the triumph of democracy, we are showing a singular lack of self-critical awareness."

What is common to these three men is the assumption that emerging Europe constitutes a territory open to foreign interference. Who grants the *Dawson Newsletter* readers the right and the competence to consider the "reconfiguration of Europe" and of course eventually to give advice? What kind of democracy and human rights protections will satisfy Monsieur Jacques Attali and convince him to make investments, which is obviously not a matter of human rights but of business? And, I am sorry to say, why does Mr. Bellah think that democracy would be exhilarating to these nations? They may answer with Vergil: "*Timeo Americanos et dona ferentes*!" There *are* such things as poisoned gifts.

All this and much more is a case of *déjà vu*, reminiscent of when Woodrow Wilson wanted to teach high principles to these same nations and ended up abetting innumerable holocausts. It also reminds us of post-1960 Africa, decolonized by men with high principles who dictated the exact shape of things to come among the continent's tribes and ended up imposing beastly tyrants on them, or, in the best cases, allowing them to fall back on their old structures and traditions. If there would have been a BERD bank, distributing manna according to Africa's compliance with Western standards of democracy and human rights, the bank's assets would have remained undisbursed.

I am sure Mr. Bellah wrote the above sentence in good faith, because he is steeped in a democratic world view. But has he reflected on the possibility that while he is critical of capitalism, other people and nations may be critical of both capitalism *and* democracy? It comes down to this: why do we so matter-of-factly assume that the emerging nations of Europe are interested in democracy? Because they have the Greeks, the Romans, and Christianity in their tradition, like we do? But Greek thinkers and Roman jurists actually rejected democracy, and Christian philosophers are not known, until Jacques Maritain, to have favored it. Does Eastern and Central Europe's tradition contain the seeds of democracy? Hardly; perhaps the Czechs (but not the Slovaks); the Poles had a very bad experience with it; the Hungarians never really tried; the Rumanians paid lip service to it only. It is with capitalism as it is with democracy: everybody wants private property, but this desire is a far cry—as Mr. Bellah's Hungarian friend confirmed—from a "market economy" and from "capitalism." Private property is to capitalism what leisurely morning exercise is to training for the Olympics.

This is not to say that the nations of Eastern and Central Europe have not practiced democracy for centuries, in their own way—in village communities, assemblies, personal relationships. What they have not had is Leviathan, an ideological mechanism that stops not at the voting booth but invades the family, the classroom, the courts, and every aspect of public life. Those nations do not want and do not need our kind of democracy. Mr. Bellah speaks of small communities, involvement, neighborliness. The essentially peasant

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civilizations of this area of the world know these things intimately; they have practiced them for a thousand years, partly having learned them in the course of occupations by foreign powers and foreign ideologies. They do not need Western advice on how to live and how to be human, sociable, gentle, severe—or, for that matter, angelic or beastly. They are like everybody else, like Westerners, like Americans. Minus the meddlesomeness.

Most advice-givers argue that we (we who?) should not repeat the mistakes of the past, by which, very unilaterally, they mean that the West should protect Eastern and Central Europe from new totalitarianisms. How moving! Why did the West not display such a laudable attitude at Yalta, or in 1956, 1968, 1981—these dates marking the servitude imposed and reimposed by that great Western ally, Soviet Russia? In a word, the present solicitude "stinks."

Does the do-gooding West not understand that by gently forcing, with dollars and sticks, Europe to adopt the West's way of life and ideological convictions, it prepares a repeat of the period between 1920 and 1940, precisely the period to be avoided? Let me explain. There were many do-gooders at Versailles in 1920; Lloyd George remarked that President Wilson came there as the "personal spokesman for the Ten Commandments." They were as guilty as anybody else for the successive phenomena of humiliations, inflation, the collapse of the middle class, the rise of Hitler and communism, and finally the war. Yet, what the West is preparing now shows that nothing has been learned, or that what was learned has been forgotten. Given another ten years of the treatment now proposed, in the name of Western benevolence, and you will see extremist parties once again. No, history does not exactly repeat itself; there will be no Weimar Republic or Nazis. But there just may be a gathering of disgusted elements who are willing to embark on a new adventure, turning on BERD bankers like Mr. Attali.

A kind of self-imposed censorship prevents me from listing examples of the behavior of Western presslords, joint-venturers, investors, and propagandists. Besides, there are always those who behave in an exemplary and constructive fashion, and do not step on sensitive toes. Let's hope that they will know how to moderate their colleagues' ardor. This can only begin when the West stops giving advice to the intelligent people "over there" about how to conduct their own affairs. For example—the last one—there are now educational groups in these United States who plan "traveling seminars" that would "save" the school systems of these nations from their recent heritage and inculcate them with the right content and the correct methods of education. Can anyone believe that in its present shape American education has anything to teach the world, that it can serve as a model? Even under communism schools "over there" taught more history, geography, languages, literature, even Latin than I ever saw in American high schools and colleges. There were some grotesque cases when the teacher, a party hack, arrived in class in worker's overalls and before starting to teach hung his Kalashnikov on the wall. Students remained wooden-faced, read novels brought from home, and gave the required answers when called upon to recite. They didn't even bother to make fun of such a man.

The less we preach to these nations, the better. Instead of the machine gun, they may see the dollar sign on the wall.

Thomas Molnar's most recent book is The Church, Pilgrim of Centuries.

Letter From the Lower Right

by John Shelton Reed

Southern Spies in the Ivy League

◆

Several recent letters from readers outside the South have contained clippings and firsthand reports about the progress of Our Nation's cause. I hope my correspondents don't mind, but I've come to think of them as a sort of intelligence service, even sometimes as a Fifth Column.

One expatriate, for instance, sent along a brochure for a Boston bank. Its cover shows a yuppie couple on their boat, sipping wine against a backdrop of the Boston skyline, enjoying the good life that their savings or low-interest loan has made possible. On the bow of the boat, so inconspicuous that it presumably escaped the bank's notice, is a rebel flag decal. My spy labeled the photograph: "The Confederate Navy in Boston Harbor."

Keep those cards and letters coming, folks.

* * *

A couple of less cheering reports have come in from the Ivy League—one each, as it happens, from Yale and Harvard.

At Yale, as you may know, there is a residential college named for John C. Calhoun, class of 1804. I've never visited Calhoun College, but it sounds like a sort of oasis in the poststructuralist wasteland of New Haven. In a devil-may-care display of speciesism, for instance, its oak-paneled dining hall is adorned with Old South hunting pictures.

"Above the great fireplace at the end of the room," my correspondent reports, "hangs a portrait of the Great Nullificator with his long white hair brushed defiantly back. His countenance is stern, almost frowning at the rascality of Yankee capitalists." The Fellows' Common Room boasts a framed copy of the Charleston *Mercury*'s announcement of secession, and the college's dean carries the senator's walking stick at commencement, instead of the customary mace. (By the way, where is Preston Brooks's cane when we need it?)

Anyway, Yale produced nine Confederate generals and a secretary of state, so it's only fitting that this aspect of its heritage should be honored, right?

Wrong. Pamphlets appeared last spring, suggesting by selective quotation not only that Calhoun championed slavery (which he did, of course), but that he championed nothing else. They also pointed out that the sum of his monetary contributions to Yale was one hundred dollars in 1824. (Does this mean that if he'd come across in a bigger way his politics could be overlooked?)

The point of these pamphlets is that Yale should change the college's name. Change it to what, the pamphlet-writer

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saieth not, but since all of the Yale colleges are named for dead white men, presumably heterosexual—well, I fear the worst.

Damn it, it's time for the loyal remnant at Calhoun College to think about secession. Take the college's emoluments, take its hunting prints and Charleston *Mercury* clipping, take the old man's walking stick, and head south. Maybe it wasn't a good idea to honor Yale with your presence in the first place.

You know, this is the kind of thing that makes otherwise mild-mannered Southern white boys in New England colleges want to chew tobacco, crank up Hank Williams Jr. on the stereo, and run up the rebel flag. Black folks won't believe this, but that last impulse has absolutely nothing to do with them.

* * *

Which leads me to the Harvard story.

A clipping from the Boston *Globe* tells of the travails last spring of Miss Brigit Kerrigan, a Harvard pre-law student who had the temerity to hang a Confederate battle flag from her dormitory window. The *Globe*'s reporter called Miss Kerrigan "aggressively Southern," apparently because she wears floral prints and pink sweaters and addresses journalists as "ma'am." In fact, she comes from the Virginia suburbs of D.C., but, as she rightly pointed out, "You can be born in Alaska and still be Southern. It's a state of mind." Besides, her daddy runs a chewing tobacco trade association.

Anyway, soon after Miss Kerrigan's display of Southern pride, the sensitivity police moved in. Her faculty housemasters wrote in an open letter that they "empathize with those for whom public display of the Confederate flag is a source of pain," and rebuked Miss Kerrigan for being "unwilling to join this community spirit by removing her flag." She found herself being Kitty Kellied in a Harvard *Crimson* biographical sketch, and the president of the university himself called her action (guess what) "insensitive." (He also said it was "unwise," an argument that doesn't impress Southerners, who, after all, started a war without having any munitions factories.)

You know, if the president had really wanted to persuade Miss Kerrigan, he wouldn't have called her "insensitive," he'd have criticized her manners. For a well-raised Southerner, that's the killer argument. And, actually, her manners did leave something to be desired. It's true that her flag offended the people she wanted to offend (who could use some offending, unless they've changed since I left Cambridge in 1964). But it also annoyed some bystanders, including some of her fellow Southerners, black ones in particular.

Jacinda Townsend, of Bowling Green, Kentucky, for instance, responded to Miss Kerrigan's flag by flying one of her own—with a swastika on it. Miss Townsend (who, by the way, spoke to the *Globe* movingly and eloquently of her own love for the South) said that her intent was to get *all* flags banned, by flying one that she assumed would offend everybody.

Well, it certainly did that, and she finally took it down when the Black Student Association asked her to, saying that it was making black-Jewish relations more difficult. Miss Townsend said that she hadn't realized how monstrously and particularly offensive the swastika is to Jewish students.

Having grown up in the small-town South myself, I believe her. But look here, Miss Townsend, I also believe—in fact, I know—that many white Southerners simply don't realize how threatening you find the Confederate flag. I'm not saying they'd stop displaying it if they *did* realize that (they might just tell you to get over it), but it's a fact that most of them don't mean what you think they mean, any more than you meant what Hillel thought you meant.

More about this business of meaning in a minute, but while I'm giving unsolicited advice, I have some for the rebel lass, Miss Kerrigan, too. It comes in the form of a story.

From time immemorial our local chapter of the Kappa Alpha Order has flown the Confederate flag during the week of its Old South Ball. Starting in the 1960's that practice every year occasioned rancorous ill-will, until a couple of years ago when some genius decided to fly the Confederate national flag, the Stars and Bars proper, instead of the battle flag. Now an eerie calm has descended. The brothers still honor their traditions, but now with a flag that apparently lacks the offensive connotations of the Southern Cross. Think about that, Miss Kerrigan.

* * *

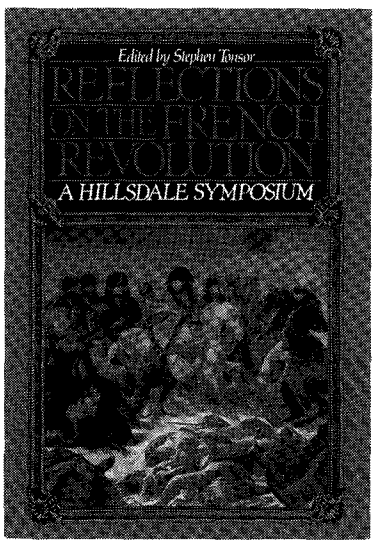
But, of course, one reason nobody objects to the Stars and Bars is that hardly anybody knows what it is. When Yankee Pharisees get going on the unrighteousness of our people and our heritage and you want to stick it in their ear, only the battle flag will do.

Sticking it in their ear is what I take Miss Kerrigan's real purpose to have been, and I respect her for it. Raising hell is a traditional Southern pastime, and she did a bang-up job of it. As she said to the *Globe*, "If they talk about diversity, they're gonna get it. If they talk about tolerance, they better be ready to have it."

In other words, *here's* some "multiculturalism," sucker—in your face.

And what, after all, *does* the flag mean? To Miss Kerrigan's critics and apparently to the Harvard establishment it means hate, and violence, and the Ku Klux Klan. But to her, she says, it means:

REFLECTIONS ON THE FRENCH REVOLUTION



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> All that is noble and young and rebellious and brave. Tenacity in the darkest hour. Respect for truth, integrity, character, and duty. That is the flag of the war for Southern independence.

Who's to say she's wrong about that? Not Jane Tompkins of the Duke English department, who says that "reader-response" critics like herself "deny the existence of objective texts and indeed the possibility of objectivity altogether [thus making discourse] responsible for reality and not merely a reflection of it." Not her colleague Frank Lentricchia, either; what he says of literature—that it "is inherently nothing, or it is inherently a body of rhetorical strategies waiting to be seized"—is surely even more true of colors on a cloth.

So get this: we must establish and maintain a counterhegemonic discourse. Because the flag is a text that each reader (re)constructs for her/himself, we must foreground its semiotic interrelationship with the historic national liberation struggle of a Third World people, resisting the attempt to privilege the hegemonic reading. (How'm I doing?)

Buried in this steaming pile of trendy b.s. is a valid point, which is that since 1865 rebellious spirits of many nations have seen the Confederate flag as a symbol of freedom. Many have seen the Southern cause as the cause of liberty—tragically flawed by its link to human bondage, sure, but the Confederates paid the price for that.

You don't believe me? Read the account in *Southern Daughter*, a new biography of Margaret Mitchell coming out in September, of how *Gone With the Wind* was received. It was read around campfires on both sides of the Spanish Civil War: each side, believing its cause was just, identified with the Confederates. Later, the book was popular among the anti-Nazi resistance, then within the captive nations of Eastern Europe.

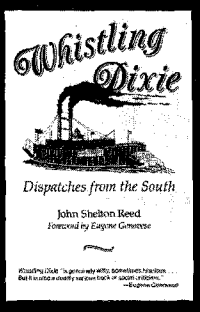
I can attest to that last audience. On my office wall is a news photo from Erfurt, formerly of the German Democratic Republic, shortly after its liberation. It shows Chancellor Kohl speaking to a large crowd in the town square. Many of his listeners wave West German flags. Far in the back, however, one citizen is waving a battle flag of the late C.S.A.

And I can top even that. For a while last year I had a folded Confederate flag on my office desk. (I guess that needs some explaining. It was there because an Israeli friend had written to ask a favor. His eighteen-year-old son, a tank gunner in the Israeli army, had been reading about Nathan Bedford Forrest and wanted a rebel flag to fly from his turret. You'd be surprised how hard it is to find a Confederate flag in Chapel Hill these days, but when I put out a call for help, I got *two* flags, one from a Kappa Alpha of my acquaintance, the other from a friend who happened to be passing Stuckey's on the interstate. I sent one on to the Golan Heights—where it flies today: I have a photograph. The other I put on my messy desk.)

Anyway, one day, I had a visitor, a scholar from Tbilisi, Soviet Georgia, on an American tour. He saw the flag on my desk, recognized it, and asked where he could get one. Naturally, I insisted that he take mine.

Now, I don't know if he really understood what he was saying, but after he thanked me he said (and I swear this is true), "Someday this will fly in a free Georgia."

John Shelton Reed comes from East Tennessee, where Confederate flags are more common now than they were in 1861-65.



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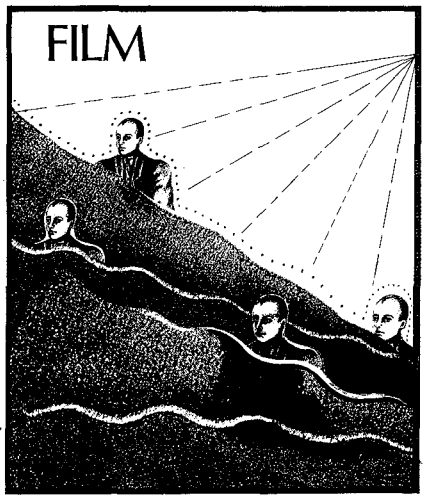

Anna Mycek-Wodecki

True Confessions of a Failed Hack

by Stephen Provizer

It's the *Last* Draft You Want to Write, Stupid, Not the First

I began my relationship with Harvey visualizing Rolls-Royces and starlets. I ended up as so many writers have—staggering, script in hand, out of this erstwhile mogul's office straight into the nearest bar; a cut-rate version of Ray Milland in *The Lost Weekend*. Attend to this cautionary tale, all of you who would avoid the same grisly fate.

Harvey was co-owner of a large film exhibiting corporation and the spouse of an old high-school friend; yes, my "entrée." A brief note aimed at reminding her of my writing skills bore fruit, and she wrote back to tell me they were ready to expand from Exhibition into Production and were developing an idea for a teen-oriented movie. (I eventually came to understand that "ideas" for teen movies were not really developed; they were actually extruded from various tubes until the proper ilk of goop oozed out onto the page.) She asked me to forward any scenarios I might have on hand and then, perhaps, Harvey and I could talk.

I didn't have anything that really fit the bill, but after a week of intensive effort, emerged with two rip-snorting scenarios: *Blood-sucking Nymphets of Planet Gamma Z*, the plot of which is self-explanatory, and *Nazi Motorcycle Bimbos, Part 5: The Resurrection*, my homage to the early Howard Hawkes. The fact that he liked them pleased me; the fact that he didn't think they were satirical scared me to death.

Either way, they served their purpose and the day finally arrived when I was ushered into the sanctum sanctorum—the offices of Worldwide Cinema and its East Coast president, Harvey Lemmon. The conference room/office was decorated, as all such offices are, with a *Variety*-laden coffee table, a half-dead ficus tree, cushy leather sofa, large black conference table, posters of *Halloweens* I through IV, a stereo system, and Harvey's enormous desk. I soon learned that Harvey followed a strict routine when entering the space: first, he surveyed his bald spot in the mirror and did whatever patch-up he could, and then he went to the stereo and put on his favorite lite rock station. ("I think music makes the office much cozier, don't you, Steve?")

Wearing the unofficial uniform of the mogul—sweater, eyebrows, pinky ring, and potbelly—he began by reminding me of my tenuous status: "Steve, do you realize how many people would give their right arms to be in your position? I mean, as soon as you get off the plane in L.A., everybody's trying to show you their screenplay—the taxi driver, the waitress—everybody."

Then, he gave me a history of the project up to that point, which sounded like the gory odyssey of the *Maltese Falcon* ("The property somehow came into the hands of one M. Kamiroff, a Russian agent, who coated the valuable script with a layer of thick black enamel . . . "). Several other "spec" writers had already been chewed up and spit out by Harvey and his West Coast partner, but when you have stars in your eyes and what passes for your bankroll wouldn't choke a gerbil, it's hard to hear the warning bells going off in your brain. As we parted, Harvey suggested that I acquaint myself with the genre by taking in some teenage films and off I sallied, firm of mind, if ignoble in purpose.

By the time I finished the orgy, thirty days and uncountable Junior Mints later, my fedora, which used to fit like a glove, now bobbed on my head like an olive in a martini. I did, however, learn the generic elements of your basic teen movie: it is populated by savage and/or cretinous adults; kids who are either geeks or heroes of Olympian stature (in the more complex versions, these two transpose); the tone is a sort of washed-out sit-com moralism, with just enough T and A to get the sacred "R" rating; obligatory scenes include voyeurism in the locker room, wimp loses virginity, peeing in the popcorn, barfing anywhere, and cheerleader simulated striptease.

Throughout this period of "research," Harvey's ongoing commentary was: "Steve, you're not writing art here, you're just baking a pie. That's all it is. You put in a little of this and a little of that and there you are." As time rolled by, I began to think of myself as a kind of ersatz Sweeny Todd, grinding up half-baked ideas and forming them into semidigestible, 90-minute celluloid pies. In the end, he could have saved us both a lot of trouble by just arming a fifteen-year-old with qualudes and a pair of scissors and locking him in a room with piles of stock footage.

I'm only human, however, and allowed the perks of the job to keep me from thinking too closely about what I was doing: I could walk into most theaters in town whenever I wanted; I was lounging in penthouses at the Prudential Center, drinking wine and watching video tapes. Plus, I was at-

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tending screenings in the Fox Building in what passes for a film district in Boston. Imagine the cachet of being able to see Woody's latest before it was released.

The first draft took three weeks, a time during which my friends began to notice a de-maturation process that would continue until the very end. I had immersed myself in my task to the point where my face started to break out and my conversation became an incoherent sequence of "likes," "grodies," and "awesomes." Harvey's response was cautiously optimistic: "This is a good start, Steve, but we still have a long way to go." When I asked him what he didn't like about it, he leaned over the table, pointed toward his navel and said: "I just don't feel it in my puppik." Unfortunately, his criticisms never became any more specific, and I began to see that our relationship would indeed be 50/50. That is, half tooth-grinding frustration, half paranoia.

The paranoia arose from the title of the movie, which was so good, so sure-fire, that they had already lined up their investors on the basis of it alone. I was told that if there was a leak, there would be big trouble. What trouble was never actually spelled out, but the following true exchange gives you — as it gave me — a good idea of what they meant.

We were wrestling with a tricky plot point: one of the protagonists has his manuscript stolen and discovers the culprit; what revenge should he take? Harvey asked what I would do if someone stole the idea for our movie. I shrugged my shoulders and said I thought these ideas were pretty much common currency and that I didn't suppose I'd do anything. I asked him what he'd do.

"I'd have him killed," says Harvey.

The expression on my face must have betrayed some disapproval, because he backed off to the extent of saying he'd at least have his legs broken.

I like to think I used some of this struggle between the sacred and the profane in my next draft, especially in the part where the villain gets his anatomy put into a vise by a pack of rampaging coeds, and Harvey, too, thought it was pretty good: "Steve, I think it's time for a conference call to the coast." Well, call we did, but the West Coast mogul was unmoved and apparently Harvey didn't feel it strongly enough in his puppik to fight for it, so we were back to square one.

It was decided that our location wasn't right and that the answer was to set the movie on Cape Cod. So, I was sent down for an inspirational weekend in Falmouth. The trip was not the idyll it could have been, however, because it was a bleak, rainy late November and there was nary a nubile teen in sight. Also, having been separated from my perks, it was becoming more and more difficult for me to return to the grim realities of rock and roll and raging hormones.

Finally, around page 50 and unable to bull through a dense writer's block, I had serious intimations of disaster. I realized that the only sure path to success — a partial lobotomy — was out of my price range. (Ain't that always the way? You need the money to get the lobotomy, but you need the lobotomy to get the money.) I had to face facts; as far as cheesy teen movies were concerned, I was a wash, a bozo, a loser.

A tinge of hostility began to creep into my scenes — giant roaches devoured frat houses, earthquakes annihilated Homecoming queens; I began to have a recurring dream that I was being dissected by a biology teacher with a pinky ring and fangs. Being an adolescent was no picnic the first time; having to relive it was utter hell. But we writers are nothing if not obsessive and I gutted it through to page 90.

When, red-eyed and trembling, I brought it to the sanctum sanctorum and handed it to Harvey, he scrunched up his face, plastered over his bald spot and sourly pointed out that I had spelled his name wrong on the title page. At that moment, the truth was revealed to me and the entire scenario was stripped down to its essential bleakness. I saw clearly that these people would never make this movie; that this was the PROJECT THAT WOULD NOT DIE. This juggernaut, this writer's doomsday machine would go on and on, finding and devouring new victims throughout all eternity. Every writer in the world would eventually work on this project, but in a reversal of the old pyramid scheme, only *one* would get paid!

When the verdict was finally passed

LIBERAL ARTS

POP FICTION

Whatever may be said against the novelettes and serials which foster the profound sentimentalism of the man in the street, there is no count against them which bears any resemblance to the heavy responsibility of the polished and cynical fiction fashionable among the educated class. It does not bring into the world new sins or sinister levities or passions at once savage and artificial. The novelette may basely grovel before strength, but at least it does not basely grovel before weakness. It may speak openly and without reticence of emotions that are sacred and should be kept in the heart, but at least it does not speak openly and without reticence of emotions that are despicable and should be spewed out of the mouth.

. . . That the actions of the figures are singularly languid and inevitable, that the characters are endowed with a very simple stock of virtues and vices, that the morality of the story is never for a moment mingled or perplexed, that over the whole scene broods the presence of an utterly fatalistic optimism, all this only makes the matter richer and quieter for tired intellects and tortured nerves.

—from "Sentimental Literature," by G.K. Chesterton

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down a week later, it was not unexpected: "Steve, I think we were closer to it on the second draft. But Steve," — this is the unkindest cut of all — "you gave it your best shot." My best shot? No, that would have been a .38 slug in Harvey's omniscient puppik.

While a Bronson-like ending would have been the most satisfying for this gothic story, I'm going to have to settle for the milder satisfaction of writing this cautionary tale and, in so doing, helping to raise the paranoia level of aspiring film writers to its proper level. Meanwhile, until the next call comes asking me to sell out, I'm camping out in the balcony of the local Rep House. You can't miss me; I'm the one rolled up in a fetal ball, leafing through a tattered Rolls-Royce owner's manual, mentally recasting *Caligula*.

Stephen Provizer writes from Cambridge, Massachusetts.

Intimations of Mortality

by David R. Slavitt

The Silence of the Lambs
Produced by Kenneth Ull, Edward Saxon, and Ron Bozman
Directed by Jonathan Demme
Written by Ted Talley
From the novel by Thomas Harris
Released by Orion

Open Doors
Produced by Angelo Rizzoli
Directed by Gianni Amelio
Written by Vicenzo Cerami and Mr. Amelio
From the novel by Leonardo Sciascia
Released by Orion Classics

Honesty in movie-reviewing is a giddy business, which is what I suppose Robert Warshow meant when he wrote that the most difficult thing a movie critic has to do is "admit he was there." What do you do when you catch yourself liking some obviously contrived and even stupid piece of kitch? How do you convey accurately the kitchiness that was also, in its dopey or manipulative way, engaging and effective? Even more awkwardly, what do you do if you find yourself wool-gathering, even dreaming, having dozed off for a bit? Do you go ahead and review your dreams?

Just short of that absurd extremity is the response required by the kind of movie that plays to basic assumptions that may never actually be specified but that are obviously in operation. If the appeal of the movie depends on some kind of mythopoetic engineering, it can be important to try to make explicit and coherent these peculiar assumptions, not necessarily because the excellence of the film requires such analysis, but because the commercial success of the enterprise suggests that the guesses of the producer, director, and screenwriter were, this time at least, shrewd and correct. There is an authority if not an eternal truth to these bizarre soundings of the popular mind. Money talks, and tens of millions of dollars may have something important to tell us.

All of this is prefatory to — and a kind of apology for — my discussion of *The Silence of the Lambs*, Jonathan Demme's silly but successful horror film with Anthony Hopkins and Jodie Foster. It is hardly an estimable achievement in cinema — and isn't trying to be. Down-and-dirty, it flirts with sleaze and flaunts its gore. For a certain kind of knowledgeable cinéaste, there is even a little in-joke in Roger Corman's cameo appearance as the director of the FBI, Corman being the old schlock-meister whose films provided modest employment for Boris Karloff, Peter Lorre, and Vincent Price at the end of their careers in a series of American-International cheap-jack pastiches of Poe. But these sly nods to the *cognoscenti* are not reassuring. All they mean is that the basic appeal of the movie is strong enough and crude enough to allow for a few random gestures of self-consciousness (or apology or denial). We must not allow ourselves to be distracted by artsy embellishment.

The story is a curious one. Jodie Foster is Clarice Starling, the not-quite-yet Special Agent of the FBI (she's still in training) dispatched to interview Anthony Hopkins (Hannibal Lector, M.D., or "Hannibal the Cannibal" — he's a brilliant psychoanalyst who is now himself confined in an exquisitely medieval institution for the criminally insane because he is a serial killer who eats his victims). The object of this interview is for the pretty young Starling to enlist the wicked doctor's aid in the apprehension of yet another serial killer presently on the loose who has been flaying large young women in order to sew himself a dress made of their skins.

None of this bloody business is quite serious. There is an occasional frisson of cheery disgust when one maniac or the other cuts up a bit, but what we notice is Hopkins's performance — so suave, polished, and sophisticated as to be endearing. And that's what is supposed to strike terror into the hearts of the audience and impress them as evil. Never mind that he eats people, corpses or morsels he can snap from a living but occasionally unwary guard; what's sinister is that he plays Bach inventions on his cassette recorder and has copies of *Poetry* lying around in his cell — along with recent issues of *Bon Appétit*. He is able to do a detailed drawing of the duomo of Florence from memory — and it is his talent, taste, and refinement that set him apart and, therefore, make him a monster. He is not accidentally named — he is "Lector," the man who knows how to read! Intellectuals are bad people, then? Cannibals ravening off the rest of us? Precisely so.

The declension is from Sherlock Holmes, with whom we used to identify (as opposed to Lestrade, that contemptible bureaucratic oaf), to the innocent, not-quite-dry-behind-the-ears trainee, Foster's Starling, the helpless and drab little bird who is our stand-in now and is forced to abase herself in not-so-subtle ways because she needs the help of the dangerous but warped mind on the other side of the protective glass.

Dr. Lector is able to categorize Starling at once, and we are almost as startled as she when he announces that she has a good bag but cheap shoes and observes that her accent is not yet sufficiently erased to disguise her origin in some coal-mining town in West Virginia. He can sniff the air and announce that she sometimes wears *L'Air du Temps*, "but not today." This patina of civility and cultivation only makes Lector's savagery more impressive and more frightening — and the unspoken message that animates the jumbled and fitfully plotted movie is

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that intellectual achievement is suspicious per se. Dr. Frankenstein no longer needs a monster, having become himself the sufficient vehicle of the public's resentments, loathings, and fears.

The bizarre ending of *The Silence of the Lambs*, which seems to have been the compromise result of a great many conferences, is one in which, after a suitably balletic chase and fight sequence, Jodie Foster blows away one serial killer. But then, as she graduates from the FBI academy, she gets a phone call from the other, Hannibal—who is at large and about to pounce on his next victim (also a psychiatrist!). It's a complicated business in which a) those damned intellectuals get off every time, don't they?, but b) we're kind of pleased because, aside from his one deplorable eccentricity, Hopkins is such an amiable fellow, and c) his next victim is a psychiatrist too, meaning one of those cerebral types who are obviously expendable. That this is the moral resolution, our conventional happy ending, is somewhat unsettling for what it suggests about the conventions and where they have taken us in these last days of the millennium.

In this connection, I think of *Flatliners*, last year's slick little horror caprice in which a bunch of medical students experiment on one another, making small tourist excursions into death's Magic Kingdom. Eschatology is an area of inquiry perhaps more susceptible to vulgarization than any other, and the *Flatliners* version is more or less predictable and moralistic. These youngsters are haunted by their misdeeds and use their moments in the Great F/X Beyond to understand and try to repair the wrongs they've committed—upon others or even upon themselves. There are probably two assumptions operating here, the first being that young doctors can't possibly know enough to understand the moral and spiritual implications of what they're doing. This is probably true, and to some degree it then follows that all medical students are more or less in Dr. Frankenstein's position—operating out of their depth and trusting to their luck in an unreliably benevolent and sometimes unforgiving universe. The charm of these youngsters—Kiefer Sutherland, Julia Roberts, and such scrubbed and wholesome types—therefore becomes slightly ominous and scary.

The second set of postulates of that film is rather less specific but perhaps worth indicating—about the moral calculus that governs the universe. My own guess is that all popular culture involves outdated assumptions—stylistic, epistemological, metaphysical, and moral—from the high culture of the previous generation. Popular novels are more or less revivifications of Galsworthy and Wells; ballets in commercial musicals are Agnes de Mille restorations; even the watercolors in motels are imitations of last-gasp school-of-Paris impressionism. The late 19th century's suspicion of science and its corollary nostalgic assertions of theistic moralism have trickled further down and survive in such works as this. The choice is whether to play for laughs—as Albert Brooks does in *Defending Your Life*—or to try for something less intentionally funny. In either event, the afterworld is some conflation of Vergil and Dante with the more accessible fantasies of Robert Louis Stevenson, Mary Shelley, and Bram Stoker. For the rubes and boobs, it passes as authentic, while the rest of us can take it as camp.

Altogether different in its attitudes about life and death is *Open Doors*, an extremely intelligent, rather restrained, darkly brooding film about Sicilian justice under the fascists in 1937. There is no need to devote time or effort to establishing the corruption of the moral and legal climate. Against that dismal and distressing background—which isn't merely intellectual but which we confront in the arid Sicilian countryside and the tacky extravagance of Palermo's architecture—the fervor of an individual juror and, even more interesting, the fussiness of an individual judge break through the murk to search out something that looks very much like truth, or justice, or even wisdom. The three brutal murders with which the film commences are explained, revealed, illuminated to the point where we can understand how Tommaso Scalia (Ennio Fantastichini) is as much a victim as those he has killed. And if the juror (Renato Carpentieri) and judge (Renzo Giovampietro) try in their different ways and for their different reasons to save the life of Scalia, their efforts finally come to nothing, because Sicily is no place either for the naive idealism of the one or the sophisticated punctilio of the other. Or Europe, or the world, for that matter.

It is a stately, stark but beautiful film, and one of its minor achievements is the casual assumption it makes that virtue is, inevitably, rare, the extravagant and quixotic demonstration of individual souls. The mob is never virtuous, has no patience with the fine distinctions virtue often demands, and is generally crude, vulgar, imprecise—and therefore wrong. This is not a message large numbers of moviegoers are likely to welcome with great enthusiasm, but then it isn't one many moviemakers try to deliver. The choice of time and place, though, suggests a background of utter moral chaos. The motive for Scalia's murders is revenge—but it takes Judge Sanna and us a while to figure out what the affront had been. At first we assume it is only that he'd been fired from his bureaucratic job (he'd been stealing, but then so had everyone else). But while this might explain the first two killings—of the man who now sits at his old desk, and of the *chef de bureau* who had been his superior—the third murder, of his wife, Rosa, is hard to account for without delving further. And whatever his reasons may have been, the defendant is unwilling to talk about them.

The persistent inquiry on the part of the judge seems, at first, almost silly—we've seen the murders, after all, witnessed them in their blunt and dreadful brutality. What possible difference could it make about what was going on in Scalia's mind? But it does make a world of difference, and there is a kind of cleansing that we feel when the decision is reached not to execute a death sentence upon the condemned man. The news is delivered to him in the exercise yard of the prison where he is confined and, in a short scene of powerful understatement, Fantastichini takes a crust of bread from the pocket of his prison uniform and eats it. Life has been affirmed and humanity has been asserted.

In Sicily? In 1937? It can't last, and it doesn't. But that outcome has to do, I rather think, with the vision of the late Leonardo Sciascia, that extraordinary writer from whose novel this film was adapted. Sciascia is both saddened

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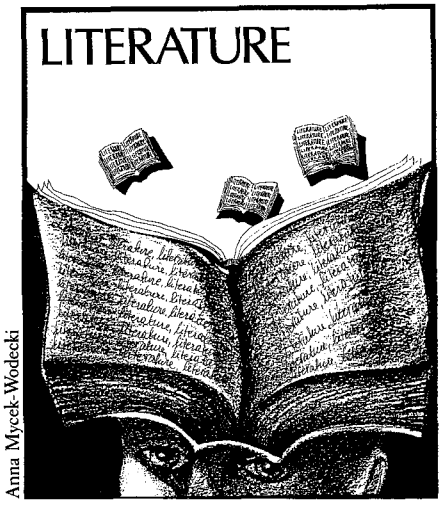
by and proud of life in Sicily. Sicilians behave badly, and it isn't because they don't know any better; what is tragic is that they do. They do know better. We all do, which makes our failures all the more heartbreaking and all the more deplorable.

David R. Slavitt is a poet and novelist who lives in Philadelphia.



Anna Mycek-Wodecki

Henry and Louise in the Lair de Clune

by Bill Kauffman

"Rochester had sprung up like a mushroom, but no presage of decay could be drawn from its hasty growth."
—Nathaniel Hawthorne

The day after his 101st birthday, novelist Henry W. Clune escorted my wife and me to a fine local restaurant, where we dined in the Henry Clune Room. "It's a sin to live this long," he said as we drained our preprandial martinis. We later repaired to his wooded estate for a nightcap and a chat into the midnight hours.

Henry had been rereading (with an array of glasses that have the magnifying power of Palomar's telescope) *The Great Gatsby*. "Somewhere in that book Fitzgerald mentions Gilda Gray," he said. "She was a friend of mine." We delved into Henry's library of scrapbooks, and sure enough, there was a faded telegram from 20's glamour girl Gilda Gray.

Visits with Henry are like that: enormously pleasurable—and personalized—tours of the last hundred years. Henry is half as old as the American republic and has a much better memory. He has lived for seventy years in that most interesting of precincts, the outskirts of fame. (When, after a whirlwind courtship, he married Olympic swimmer Charlotte Boyle, daughter of rakish adventurer Joe "King of the Klondike" Boyle, the *New York World* immortalized swain Henry in "The wooing of Charlotte Boyle" and then anathematized him in "The Shower that Shattered a Mermaid Friendship.")

I daresay that no American writer has ever known a place for as long or as well as Henry W. Clune knows Rochester, New York. He was born in 1890, to a father who once lived in the same boardinghouse as Susan B. Anthony (who was, by Mr. Clune's report, no barrel of laughs). His mother was one of 12 employees on the first payroll that George Eastman ever met. (Mom's boss was fictionalized in Clune's 1952 epic *By His Own Hand*, an ambitious work that merits comparison with Dreiser's Cowperwood trilogy.)

Henry grew up on Linden Street during "the finest time to have been alive"—the years preceding "our entrance into World War I." He flunked out of Phillips Academy, learned the newspaper racket, and soon became the most popular columnist in the city's history. Over the years he would write six novels and seven books of memoir and regional history, including *The Genesee*, a gem in the Rivers of America series.

A local imprint published a book of Henry's stories shortly after he turned 100; at 101, he's shopping around an unpublished novel describing the desolating effect the Vietnam War has on a family in a small Upstate village. On its merits alone, the novel deserves publication, and besides, Henry wryly notes, "There might be a sales dodge in the age of the author."

Lucine and I stop by the lair de Clune every ten days or so to see Henry and his son, Peter, an actor and superb raconteur. We enjoy these evenings immensely; I feel, at times, as though I've wandered into a John P. Marquand novel and have become, willy-nilly, a gentleman.

"I always wanted to be a snob," Henry admits. "But I know too many mugs." Yes, he does. Who else could balance friendships with George Cukor and characters named Peaches Strange and Rattlesnake Pete? Henry moved with remarkable agility between the country clubs and the pool halls. He knew Eastman and Frank Gannett and the fraying Rochester aristocracy they destroyed—"the old Castilians in tattered purple snooting the world and owing the grocer."

Clune cheerfully concedes that he is a provincial. He loves quoting Bernard De Voto: "Why see Paris, France, if you haven't seen Paris, Illinois?" It's easy for him to calculate the price he's paid for his stubborn parochialism—lack of critical attention and national celebrity—because he's known so many writers who haven't paid it. For instance, his Rochester friends Philip Barry and Louise Brooks.

Philip Barry grew up several blocks from Henry Clune. An Irish-Catholic boy of considerable charm, Phil left the Flower City for Yale and later George Pierce Baker's drama workshop at Harvard (where Thomas Wolfe was a classmate) and he never looked back.

"Phil was a dandy," Henry recalls; was he ever. He married a rich girl, lived at Cannes and East Hampton, and wrote a series of clever drawing-room comedies that made him "a tidy sum of money," as Wolfe noted, not without envy. For a time in the 1930's, Philip Barry was the golden boy of American theater.

Two of Barry's plays—*Holiday* and *The Philadelphia Story*—are among the most delightful of screen comedies, but except for an anthology edited by Brendan Gill, the playwright rests in obscurity. "Phil is even forgotten in Rochester," Henry laments; Barry's sophisticated epigrams and horsey-set badinage are alien to his native soil and simply cannot survive without continuous sunlight from stars afar. Phil Barry didn't need a hometown, and now, I'm afraid, his hometown doesn't need him.

Louise Brooks staggered into Rochester because she had nowhere else to go. She was a Kansas chorine who

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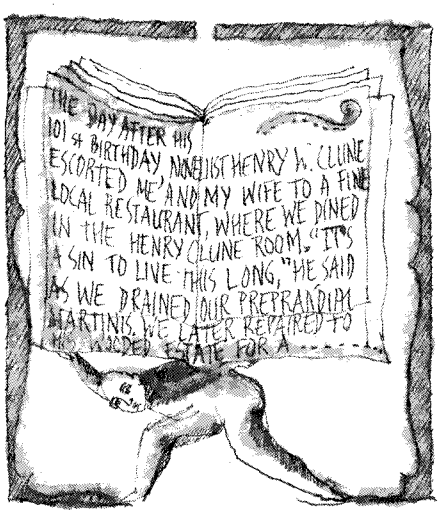
made a slew of silent movies, most famously the German G.W. Pabst's *Pandora's Box* (1929), in which she played Lulu, the guileless hedonist, irresistible to men (among others) until, lucklessly, she picks up Jack the Ripper. (Talk about Mr. Goodbar!)

Louise was an erratic, arrogant, dissipated beauty. She refused to sleep with the moguls (though she conferred her favors on almost everyone else) and ridiculed Hollywood while taking its money. The industry was run, she later wrote, by "coarse exploiter[s] who propositioned every actress and policed every set. To love books was a big laugh. There was no theater, no opera, no concerts—just those goddamned movies." A has-been at age 33, Louise fled the glitz.


THE DAY AFTER HIS
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She ended up back in Wichita, teaching dance, until a scandal involving the better part of a high-school football team made it best for her to move on. She drifted downward until 1956, when she settled in Rochester at the invitation of the curator of the Eastman Museum of Photography, whose archives she mined to write a series of razor-sharp essays later combined in *Lulu in Hollywood*.

Louise Brooks and Henry Clune began a fitful, exasperating friendship. She swam in gin on dinner dates, Henry remembers, but her bile was . . . well, bewitching in a way. She lived in a dingy apartment on Goodman Street, paid for by William Paley, an old love; Henry hated to stop by her tenement because "she'd never stop talking. You could never get out."

(I repeat this to a friend, a Brooks fancier. He is aghast. "She was casting pearls before swine!" he exclaims. I relay this to Henry, who is delighted. "Swine: oh, that's great. I've been called worse"—not least by Louise, who frequently execrated him as a "goddamn bourgeois." He asks me to extend to my friend an open invitation to "stop by and hear all about Louise. I'll tell him she wasn't any great beauty. She reminded me of general housework.")

Louise reentered the Celebrity Nation in 1979, thanks to Kenneth Tynan's lengthy paean in the *New Yorker*. European cinéastes had long insisted, "There is no Garbo! There is no Dietrich! There is only Louise Brooks!"; finally, cisatlantic adulation was hers. She died in 1985; four years later, Knopf published Barry Paris's 609-page biography. ("Mose," Henry growls, his saltiest imprecation. "Six hundred pages for an actress? That movie *Pandora's Box* bored me to tears.")

Henry showed us some poison-pen billets-doux he'd received from Louise in the final crippled years of her life. Miss Brooks soaked even her Christmas cards in vitriol: under the stenciled "Season's Greetings" her chicken-scratch lacerated Humphrey Bogart ("a gentleman and a bore"); Will Rogers (a stone-drunk who avoided human companionship: "no wonder he never met a man he didn't like"); and the talented writer who had renovated her reputation ("Tynan was no fag—just your usual upper-class English pervert").

Louise refused to indulge Henry's provincialism. "I hated you," she fondly reminisced in one Christmas letter, typically devoid of Christian charity. Henry was too . . . too . . . "Rochester." She airily dismissed Clune's claim that Phil Barry was the equal of O'Neill and Coward. She reviled Rochester as her Coventry. "To be a rebel is to court extinction," Louise once said in a boozy self-dramatizing fog, and for all her tartness and determined debauchery and undeniable pulchritude, I wonder if she ever realized that Henry, doggedly and faithfully creating a Rochester literature of place, was more of a rebel than she ever dreamed of being.

Hollywood never tempted Henry (although Frank Capra borrowed his novel *Monkey on a Stick*, which became *Meet John Doe*); neither did progress. His writings have had an elegiac air since I don't know when. Sixty years ago he was wondering "if the old spirit of neighborliness that gave such a distinct character to the average residential street before the advent of the motor car, the movie and other institutions of the present era that tend to take people out of and away from their homes, anywhere exists."

You can imagine what he thinks of the six decades since.

It's no longer safe for a woman to walk after dark down the street on which Henry Clune grew up. Philip Barry's alma mater, East High, once the city's swankiest public school, is now among its most dangerous. I attended an East basketball game last season and tried to picture Phil Barry in a fur coat waving a pennant, amidst all the black leather jackets and Raiders caps. I couldn't. East High no longer belongs to languid swells who address their parents in Barry idiom. ("Wot, Mums? Oh, you are a wench!") But let's look on the bright side: East High has graduated from Cole Porter to rap. Deft wordplay and rhyming have become *cool* in today's inner-city schools, and I don't know about you but I think that this is marvelous news.

Henry is pessimistic about the big things, but in the private realm, which after all is what matters most, he really has had a wonderful life. He is a revered figure in Rochester, his hometown. He was ever loyal to his city, which outsiders often find gray and unfriendly, and his sense of rootedness is as profound as is humanly possible.

An optimist might even say that things are looking up in Rochester. William McFeely's biography has renewed interest in adopted son Frederick Douglass. The Susan B. Anthony dollar may circulate again. You can rent *The Philadelphia Story* at any decent video store. The Louise Brooks hair helmet is back in style. Henry Clune is 101 and still writing. The circle is unbroken, sort of, and in that sea of Raiders caps I'll bet there is one boy or girl who will grab the baton and continue along the path that is Rochester's, and Rochester's alone.

Novelist Bill Kauffman writes from Batavia, thirty miles from the city that Henry Clune wrote.

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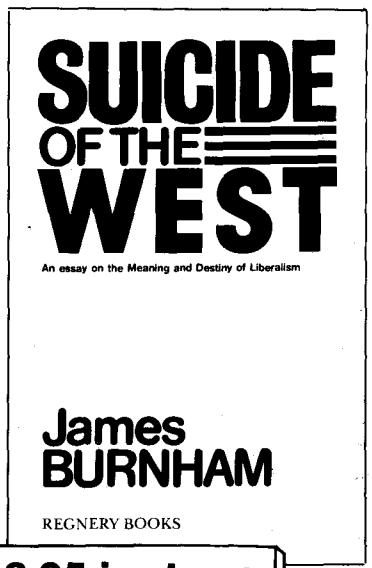

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